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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN A PREACHER'S PRACTICE
AND HOMILETIC THEORY

by

Curtis Castillow

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Instructional Technology

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2010

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ABSTRACT

A Comparative Analysis Between a Preacher's Practice and
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by

Curtis Castillow, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2010

Major Professor: Byron R. Burnham, Ed.D.
Department: Instructional Technology

This qualitative research compared the practice of an expert preacher to core concepts in homiletic theory (the art and craft of preaching), searching for discrepancies between what theory suggested and what the preacher practiced. It also sought to validate that the preacher practiced what homiletic theorists prescribed and to inform homiletic theory by describing strategies he employed unlike those espoused in homiletic theory.

To discover whether the participant's practice was congruent with theory, I first identified seminal theories. They were classified into the following modified version of Broadus's categories of ideal preaching: (a) content, (b) arrangement, (c) introduction, transition, and conclusion, (d) style, (e) illustrations, and (f) the delivery. I created a rubric from the literature review as a standard from which I compared the participant's audio and video sermons. The rubric had six categories, 39 subcategories, and 58

characteristics of ideal preaching to which the preacher was compared. The analysis included frequency counts of certain words, phrases, illustrations, and the results of the Flesch's Reading Ease score. To find strategies employed by the participant but not represented in the literature, I also used an inductive method to analyze the integral parts and patterns of the sermons.

The analysis revealed that the preacher's practice was congruent with theory yet the preacher had never read homiletic theory. Because the preacher was able to sidestep the need to study homiletics, it was concluded that for him preaching was an intuitive art/craft.

The research also revealed that the preacher had a personal homiletic philosophy wherein everything in his preparation, message design, and delivery centered on relevancy. The preacher felt strongly that the message had to apply to his listeners in meaningful ways. The preacher's strength centered not so much on how he presented, but what he presented. His sermons were filled with what homiletic theorist Sunukjian called "timeless truths." They made the preacher's sermons insightful, hopeful, and most of all, relevant to his listeners.

(242 pages)

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Curtis Castillow

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To understand the nature of this research it is helpful to have a general understanding of the field of instructional technology/learning science and instructional-design theory. This enables the reader to understand the perspective and context from which this research was based. Instructional technology and learning science “is the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using and managing appropriate technological processes and resources” (Richey, 2008). Said another way, instructional technology is a field where instructional technologists seek to make learning more effective, efficient, and appealing. Instructional technologists seek to improve learning in a variety of educational mediums that range anywhere from a textbook, computer application, television program, website, classroom, or even a chapel.

Reigeluth (1999a) stated that instructional-design theory “offers explicit guidance on how to better help people learn and develop. The kinds of learning and development may include cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual” (p. 5). He noted that instructional-design theories are prescriptive in the sense that they offer direction as to what method(s) one should use to reach certain objectives. With these general definitions, the reader should have a better understanding concerning the nature of the present research.

As societies evolve deeper into the information age, Reigluth (1999b) said learners not only need more skills to solve complex cognitive tasks, but also they need support in “noncognitive” areas such as “spiritual development” (p. 21). Martin and

Reigluth (1999) said they require support because of the “explosion of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, gang violence, runaways, crime, the divorce rate, dropouts, eating disorders, [and] all kinds of abuse” (p. 487). Learners may not only require spiritual support, but may desire it. The Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA surveyed undergraduates and faculty during a multi-institutional, longitudinal study and found a high level of student interest in spirituality (Gallagher, 2007). Because spirituality is a learner need as well as a want, Reigluth asserts that researchers and theorists need to develop and refine instructional-design theories that focus on the affective domain.

Homiletic theory (the art and craft of Christian preaching) is perhaps the oldest instructional-design theory targeting learning in the affective domain. One can trace its roots back to 5th Century Augustine (426 AD/1997). Like all instructional-design theories it is prescriptive in nature (Reigeluth, 1999a). It offers guidelines that help preachers choose methods that help them facilitate behavioral changes in listeners. Understanding this first endeavor into instructional design could help augment understanding of good instruction in other areas that target affective learning. However, to understand homiletic theory so that it can facilitate understanding of affective instruction in other areas of learning, researchers must better understand the practice of homiletics.

Granted, understanding homiletic theory or any other instructional-design theory is essential because it guides practice; but just as important, however, is researching practice because it enables researchers to test tenets of accepted theories and refine those theories so as to better reflect actual practice (Yorks, 2005). Studying practice also enables researchers to discover if practitioners actually use what theorists prescribe, or

discover whether practitioners employ methods unlike those specified by theory. For example, to learn more about the enigmatic, Atlantic-blue crab, Warner (1977) in his Pulitzer prize-winning book, *Beautiful Swimmers*, took a case-study approach to glean knowledge from the practice of Chesapeake bay fishermen. As Warner placed the fishermen's knowledge alongside biologist's, he discovered that the fishermen knew as much—if not more—about the crab's character and habits as the biologists. Warner's research gives evidence that practice has the capacity to validate and inform theory. There is also research in more traditional learning environments that help substantiate that practice has the capacity to validate and inform theory (Friedman & Rogers, 2009; Khresheh & Barclay, 2007; Kitchen & Stevens, 2008; Sagor, 1992; Sung-Chan, Yuen-Tsang, Yadama, & Sze, 2008). In the same way that researching practice validated and improved theory in biology, it can validate and improve theory in homiletics; which, in turn, increase understanding in other affective domains that seek to foster spiritual development.

Researching practice, however, is perhaps the most significant challenge that homiletic theory faces. Homiletic theorists offer a voluminous amount of writings regarding theoretical perspectives on practice, but they offer little empirical evidence to validate those perspectives. This deficit creates an imbalance between homiletic theory and practice—an imbalance that restrains homiletics from becoming a more robust field (Guthrie, 2007). In proportion that researchers glean empirical evidence from preaching practice, they will proportionally increase their capacity to confirm and refine theory. Researchers, however, must do what Warner did. They must immerse themselves in the

practice of preachers to study and identify their strategies, methods, and techniques. Then they must compare the preacher's *practice* to homiletic *theory* in the same way Warner compared the Watermen's practice to the biologist's theory. If their research cannot improve theory, then it can at least confirm or disprove it.

To their credit, homiletic theorists have analyzed, dissected, divided, described, and classified preaching strategies in a precise manner, but they offer little empirical evidence to substantiate that expert practitioners actually apply their theories. Granted, some theorists might generate theory under conditions far removed from the pulpit, rendering their theories useless in preaching practice (Hirsch, 2000); yet some homiletic theorists are actual practitioners that preach regularly, and like the watermen on the bay, they know their trade. Nevertheless, they have not accredited their findings with rigorous and methodical research—at least not in a way that gives full credence to their expertise and experience.

Despite all the contributions offered by preaching theorists over the past century, there is a shortage of empirical research in the literature—research that could improve preaching (Howden, 1989). In a search through the ProQuest dissertation database, only six dissertations surfaced that used empirical research methods to observe a preacher's practice (Golson, 2008; Lewellyn, 2002; Rushing, 2006; J. L. Smith, 1994; J. F. Taylor, 2001; Willhite, 1990). In a comprehensive review of homiletic literature, both Albrecht (1982) and Guthrie (2007) found a significant absence of empirical evidence. They also found that very few researchers used the most relevant research tools found in the human sciences. Even among the most prominent gatherings of North America scholars in

preaching—the Academy of Homiletics (AOH), and the Evangelical Homiletical Society—Guthrie finds a dearth of empirical research. Likewise, journals dedicated to preaching are virtually silent about this subject: *The African American Pulpit*, *Journal for Preachers*, *Homiletic*, *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* to name a few. The *Journal of Communication and Religion* has been the richest source for empirical research. Guthrie noted that between 1979 and 2004, it published over 60 articles. Only five, however, were research related. He concluded that preaching is the “most underconceptualized and studied phenomenon in religious studies” (Guthrie, 2007, p. 108).

To rectify this problem, it seems that the most viable solution is to do as Guthrie (2007) suggested, and probe homiletics with the same empirical tools and methods used in social sciences. This would help not only substantiate preaching theory, but it would also give homiletic theory the academic vitality it needs (Nichols, 1983).

Purpose and Objective

Many homiletic theoreticians prescribe how preachers should preach in an effective and appealing manner, and many practitioners adhere to their prescriptions. However, it is not understood to what extent a preacher actually applies core concepts in homiletic theory. It seems only natural that theorists would want to understand whether preachers actually apply their theories since in theory, applying their theories make sermons effective and appealing.

Seeking to confirm homiletic theory and refine it, this research compared the practice of an expert practitioner preacher—one who has never been exposed to

homiletics—to core concepts in homiletic theory. It sought to discover discrepancies between what theory suggests and what the preacher practiced. If the preacher practiced what theory suggested, then the research would validate that at least this preacher practiced what homiletic theorists prescribe. If the preacher, however, employed unique strategies—strategies unlike those found in homiletic theory—then his practice could inform or refine homiletic theory. By choosing a participant that possessed broad appeal among congregants (a criteria measured by his popular publications and attendance at noncompulsory events) and if he or she practiced homiletic theory, it increased the probability of confirming that homiletic theory does indeed do for preachers what it intends to do—make them expert practitioners.

Research Question

The general question this empirical research sought to answer is this: How does the practice of a preacher possessing broad appeal among listeners fit within the theoretical models coming from seminal writings in homiletic theory? More specifically:

1. What kind of strategies, methods, and techniques does the practitioner use that are unaccounted for in theory?
2. Which strategies, methods, and techniques does the practitioner use that *are* accounted for in theory?

Definition of Terms

In order for the reader to understand terms specific to this investigation,

definitions related to the research follow.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS): The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, known extensively as the “Mormon Church” or “LDS Church” is a Christian church headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah. It was established in 1830 in upper state New York (Cantwell, 2007). Ideologically, LDS adherents believe that their church is a restoration of first-century Christianity through a latter-day prophet named Joseph Smith. The LDS church is similar to other Christian churches in that both their religious practices as well as their religious education focuses on the teachings of Jesus Christ and they promote humanitarian and moral causes.

Book of Mormon: The *Book of Mormon* is a volume of sacred, ancient text revealed to Joseph Smith by an angel in 1827. It is a history of ancient Israelites, who directed by God, traveled from Jerusalem to the American continent in 600 BC (Nyman, 1992). Similar to the *Bible*, the *Book of Mormon* was written to ancient prophets who testified of Jesus Christ—his life, teachings, mission, atonement, and resurrection. Since it testifies of Christ, LDS preachers use it along with the *Bible* to convince listeners that Jesus is the Christ.

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (S&I): Within the Church Educational System of the LDS church, the S&I furnish religious education for youth and young adults ages 14-30. The S&I program comprises both volunteer and employees that provide weekday instruction for secondary, postsecondary, and adult students. Youth, ages 14-18 are taught in seminaries that are either adjacent to public high schools or located in other facilities depending on where the seminaries are located. In areas with

large populations of LDS members (e.g., Utah, Arizona, Idaho, California) instruction is offered on a released time basis during normal school days. Usually, full-time teachers teach release time seminary. In states or countries with small LDS populations, S&I offers early-morning or home-study programs. Generally, early morning is taught by volunteer men and women (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010).

Young adults ranging in ages from 18-30 are taught in institutes. Many colleges in the United States have either an LDS institute adjacent to their campus or another facility nearby. These buildings provide places for young adults to congregate and socialize. College institute classes are taught by full-time, paid teachers. S&I courses of study focus on scriptures and various gospel topics.

Campus Education Week: Campus Education Week is a continuing education program at Brigham Young University (BYU) that lasts for one week in August. Under the auspices of the Church Education System in the LDS church, approximately 200 instructors teach over 1,000 classes on education, religion, marriage, family relations, health, history, genealogy, and science. Education Week is designed mostly for adults, but anyone age 14 and over may attend. It is believed to be the largest continuing education program of its type (BYU, 2010).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the 1800s, Christian preaching has evolved from a pedantic explanation of literary and exegetical information, to contemporary models of preaching where sermons expand a central idea, apply a principle, present a subject to complete, or offer a story to be told (Robinson, 2001; Willhite, 1990). Broadus' (1897/2005) homiletic textbook set the standard for preaching theory and methods up until the 1950s (Wardlaw, 1983). Broadus provided a model of Christian preaching that focused on a deductive, rationalistic rhetoric with an emphasis in biblical foundations, style, and delivery (Willhite, 1990). In 1958, Davis, with his groundbreaking piece, *Design for Preaching*, shifted homiletics from logic, argument, and points toward an organic form that centered on metaphor, story, poetry, and imagination (P. Wilson, 2004). He believed that the sermon should grow organically from within the preacher rather than forcing its content into an external rhetorical template (Park, 2005). Davis' influence continued to grow and shifted homiletics farther from an exclusively rational logic-based sermon.

That shift accelerated in the 1970s with the writings of theorists like Craddock (2001), Long (1989), and Lowry (2001a). They modified homiletic theory so that the sermon became less deductive and more inductive, less rhetorical and more poetic, less scientific and more artful, less propositional and more allegorical, and less descriptive and more experiential. Thus, contemporary homiletics is the product of a slow evolution in practice and theory that dates back primarily to Broadus (1897/2005).

Since Broadus' (1897/2005) seminal writings, theorists have written an

astronomical number of books and articles on homiletic subjects like sermon preparation, theology, hermeneutics, epistemology, preacher characteristics, and learner differences, to name a few. To narrow the review of literature for this dissertation, this research focused on literature related to what and how preachers preach. More specifically, the preaching strategies related to the categories designated in Broadus's (1897/2005) seminal piece, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*. Broadus' categories classify the basic elements of the sermon into the following: (a) materials for preaching, (b) arrangement of a sermon, (c) style, and (d) delivery (see Figure 1). This research modified those four categories into a classification system that better reflects contemporary theory.

For example, under Broadus's (1897/2005) "Arrangement of the Sermon" category, he has two subcategories called the *introduction* and *conclusion*. In contemporary homiletics, theorists consider the introduction and conclusion an essential element in the theoretically perfect sermon. So rather than order them as subcategories of the arrangement (as Broadus does), modern-day theorists make them a category in and of themselves. In Chapell's (2005a) seminal piece, *Christ Centered Preaching*, he moves

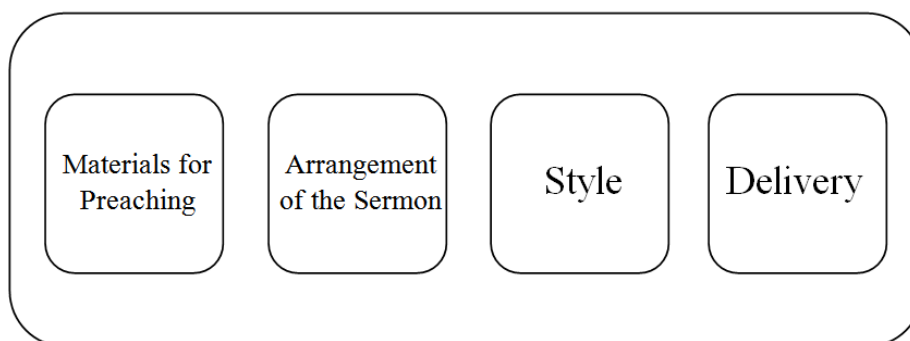


Figure 1. Broadus' four categories of a theoretical sermon.

the introduction and conclusion from a subcategory status to a main category level. Moreover, he adds transition to the category, “transition,” so that the main category has the title of “introduction, transition, and conclusion.” Chapell also moved up “illustrations” (another Broadus subcategory) to the main category position. Thus the model used in this research to which the participant is compared, is still Broadus,’ but three subcategories have been moved to the main category to reflect modern homiletics.

In addition to elevating the introduction, conclusion, and illustration to a main-category status, this research changed the title of Broadus’ category, “materials for preaching” to “content” simply because the latter term seemed more precise and reflective of current teaching and learning theories. Last, the researcher changed the title of Broadus’ category, “arrangement of the sermon” to “arrangement” for brevity sake. Therefore, the modified version of Broadus’ categories include the following: (a) content, (b) arrangement, (c) introduction, transition, and conclusion, (d) style, (e) illustrations, and (f) the delivery (see Figure 2). Though these categories do not embrace every strategy for preaching well, they do establish a useful structure for classifying and analyzing some of the most essential features of a sermon. These categories are universal enough to cross ideological boundaries (Rushing, 2006).

Though some critics see Broadus’(1897/2005) ideas as dated, or even worse, Christianized rhetoric, many see his categories as timeless. Their timeless nature has commanded respect long after homiletic fads have dimmed with age (Bailey, 1993; Beals, 2007; Reagles, 1989). Broadus’s categories provide a means to classify contemporary strategies—strategies that represent current theory. Though this literature

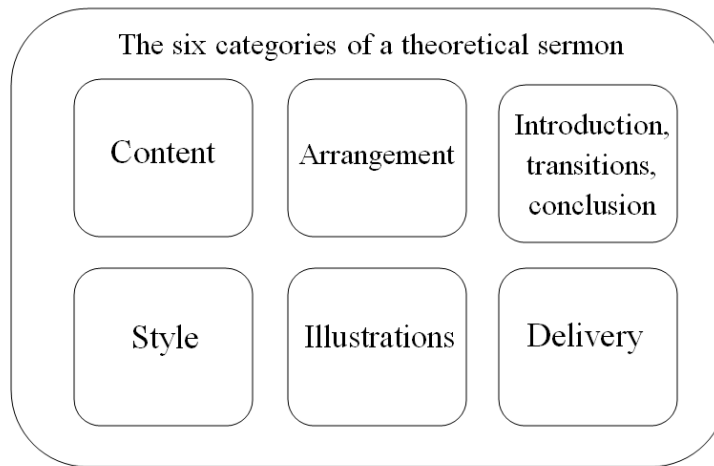


Figure 2. A modified version of Broadus' categories.

review focuses upon contemporary theory written in the past 20 years, it also includes earlier authors like Davis (1958) if their ideas still influence homiletics today.

The contemporary theories included in this literature review were found by sifting through preaching journals, articles, and books in search for anything theorists said about Broadus's (1897/2005) six categories. If a theory had a strong relationship to Broadus' categories and it surfaced repeatedly in the literature, then it was included as core theory. Various research tools and databases were used to find contemporary theories in the literature. For example, theories were found by accessing Brigham Young University's libraries including Dissertation and Theses (ProQuest), ATLA Religion Database through EBSCO Host, Ulrichsweb.com, and Google Scholar (Clark, 2009). Key terms searched from these databases were preaching, preachers, homiletic/s, and sermon/s. Within homiletic journals, the following key terms were searched: research, empirical, sermon, sermons, introduction/s, conclusion/s, transitions, illustrations, narrative, stories, arrangement, deductive, inductive, delivery, style, and content. The previous terms were

searched in the following homiletic journals: (a) *Presbyterion*, (b) *Journal of Communication and Religion*, (c) *Journal for Preachers*, (d) *Journal for Preaching*, (e) *The Expository*, (f) *Review of Religious Research*, (g) *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, (h) *Academy of Homiletics*, (i) *African American Pulpit*, (j) *Homiletic*, (k) *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, (l) *Preaching*, (m) *Currents in Theology and Mission*, (n) *Religion and Education*, (o) *Religion and Theology: A Journal of Contemporary Religious Discourse*, (p) *Religious Education*, (q) *Religious Studies and Theology*, (r) *Religious Studies Journal*, and (s) *Religious Studies Review*. In addition, over 140 books on homiletics were read in search for anything related to Broadus' (1897/2005) categories. As certain theorists surfaced repeatedly in the literature, they were tagged as seminal writers. To increase the probability that those theorists did actually represent core theory, the researcher entered their names into Google Scholar to discover how many times other theorists cited them. One can see 10 of the theorists in Table 1. Again, those six categories in this literature review are as follows: (a) content, (b) arrangement, (c) introduction, transition, and conclusion, (d) style, (e) illustrations, (f) and delivery.

Content

Koessler (2005) said that preaching luminary, Charles Spurgeon, once commented that novice preachers focus on *how* to preach, while experienced preachers focus on *what* to preach. He stated that amateur preachers asked, in effect, "How shall I say it?" while the veteran preacher thought, "What shall I say?" The "what" to preach, or "content" as Lee (1985, p. 13) called it, is what preachers say from the pulpit. It is the

Table 1

Google Search for Number of Times Theorists Were Cited

Theorist	Book Title	Number of times cited
Buttrick (1987)	<i>Homiletic: Moves and structures</i>	109
Craddock (2001)	<i>As one without authority</i>	92
Chapell (2005a)	<i>Christ-centered preaching: Redeeming the expository sermon</i>	78
Robinson (2001)	<i>Biblical preaching: The development and delivery of expository messages</i>	72
Long (1989)	<i>Preaching and the literary forms of the Bible</i>	54
Stott (1982)	<i>Between two worlds: The art of preaching in the twentieth century</i>	52
Broadus (1897/2005)	<i>On the preparation and delivery of sermons</i>	51
Davis (1958)	<i>Design for preaching</i>	50
Kaiser (1981)	<i>Toward an exegetical theology</i>	49

message of the sermon. Though each theorist has his or her idea as to what embodies ideal content for a message, five elements consistently emerge from the literature to create a foundation for consensual understanding: (a) The content of the message should be scripture centered, (b) built on generalizations, (c) applicable to listeners, (d) centered on Christ, (e) and infused with hope.

Scripture Centered

The sermon's content—its subject, principles, or doctrine—should always arise out of the text (Lloyd-Jones, 1971). Davis (1958) pointed out that the essential question is not whether the sermon uses biblical text but whether the sermon is grounded in the text, whether the sermon proclaims what the scriptures teach. Many sermons use text, he noted, but are not derived from the text. Too often, Davis said, preachers use the

scriptures to support their thoughts, rather than bend their thoughts to the scriptures. Ideally, biblical text becomes the embryo from which the central idea of the sermon grows and develops (Chapell, 1989). Both Hauerwas (1994) and Robinson (2001) believed that a sermon that germinates from the text is the very thing that gives the sermon—and its preacher—authority.

Without the authority of scripture, Chapell (2005a, 2005b) observed that preaching becomes merely an endless search for therapies and topics to win approval and promote popularity. Without authority, Robinson (2001) believed preaching invokes “little more than a wide yawn” for the simple fact that “God is not in it” (p. 20). For this reason, Chapell (2005a) encouraged preachers to anchor their sermons in scripture, because ultimately, preaching accomplishes God’s objectives not through the preacher’s capacity, but through the scripture’s efficacy. However, before preachers can proclaim the content of God’s word, they must first understand his word.

To understand his word, theorists maintain that preachers must understand the original intent of the biblical authors (Greidanus, 1999; Kaiser, 1981; McDill, 1994; Robinson, 2001; Scharf, 2005). This does not imply that theorists believe scripture cannot have a different meaning for listeners today than it did anciently. But rather than see the text as fixed with one meaning, preachers should see it as possessing many meanings to many different people at one time (P. Wilson, 2004). To ensure that contemporary meaning is congruent with ancient meaning, preachers must explore both sides of the chasm that divide the past from the present. Doing so requires painstaking, conscientious study. It requires preachers to employ a hermeneutical process called *exegesis*.

Huntsman (2005) defined exegesis as a systematic process whereby preachers ask certain questions about biblical text. This process requires preachers to work their way back to the biblical world and pull up their exegetical chairs to where the biblical authors sat so that they can understand the text's meaning within its historical-cultural context (Robinson, 2001). Asking the right questions helps them offer "honesty toward the past and responsibility toward the present" without "sacrificing history for modernity or sacrificing the present congregation in adoration of the past" (Craddock, 2001, p. 85). Theorists believe that these questions must center on literary, historical, and theocentric domains (Greidanus, 1988, 1999; Kaiser, 1981; Robinson, 2001; P. Wilson, 2004).

Literary questions help preachers unlock meaning because they enable preachers to look beyond the content of the text to the form of the text (McClure, 1991). Greidanus (1999) calls the literary form the *genre* of the text. Every biblical genre contains an inherent set of rhetorical dynamics that function to produce a certain effect in readers and listeners. Whereas David's poetic Psalms help readers feel and know, Jesus' parables help them understand and apply. Biblical writers wrote with an objective, and whether they did it consciously or not, they employed literary strategies to accomplish their objective. Long (1989) counseled preachers to ask, "What is this particular genre designed to do to listeners or readers" (p. 26). Whether biblical authors use literary features in the text to elicit cognitive or affective response, Long exhorted preachers to do the same. Subsequently, preachers can then align the objective of their sermon with the objective of the text.

Greidanus (1999) taught that preachers should also ask two *historical*-type

questions to understand God's word. First, what meaning did the author intend for the original hearers? To answer this question, preachers must ask further questions about the biblical author, the culture, the original listeners, the geography, and the social setting. The second question is simply this: what problem did the original hearers face that needed a solution, or what need did they have that God wanted to fill. Once preachers identify universal problems within the text, then they can present biblical solutions in their sermons that address those problems that still exist today.

The last category of questions that Greidanus (1999) suggested preachers should ask to understand God's word is *theocentric* in nature. Theocentric questions relate to what the passage reveals to readers about God's character and attributes. What does it reveal about his intention, desire, work, and purpose? Robinson (2001) observed that by asking these kinds of questions, preachers can prepare a religious message that listeners will find objective enough to evaluate, yet contemporary enough to be relevant.

One the whole, the exegetical process seeks to remain true to what the author wrote in the past without forfeiting meaning in the future. The process enables the sermon content to issue from the biblical text so that it is objective enough to be true, yet subjective enough to become relevant.

Built on Generalizations

Another recognizable feature inherent in ideal sermon content is what Davis (1958) called *generalizations*. In the technical sense of the term, generalizations are statements that reveal characteristics about classes or categories of persons, places, or things (Marzano, 1998). C. Miller (2006) said the best sermon content is built upon

categorical statements of truth. These statements come from a thousand facts distilled down into a single meaning. They condense a broad area of experience into a single statement (Davis, 1958). Like a proverb, they summarize phenomena and condense it into concentrated truths (Arthurs, 2007). Generalizations possess universal appeal because as homiletic theorists state, they are “timeless truths” with emphasis on application (Kaiser, 1981, p. 51; Sunukjian, 2007). “You cannot do wrong and feel right” has universal appeal because it transfers readily to different people, places, and situations (Marzano, 1998).

Generalizations are an essential part of the message content because they are what make the central idea or supportive ideas of the sermon so appealing, intuitive, and memorable. Preachers derive them by writing down the biblical writer’s main idea into a complete statement. Then, they convert that statement into a generalization that is universal enough to apply to contemporary listeners (see Table 2).

Preachers can quote generalizations *directly* from the text or they can *imply* them (R. Jones, 2002). One attribute that makes generalizations ideal content for sermons,

Table 2

Examples of Biblical Ideas Converted to Generalizations

The biblical idea	Generalizations
Rather than turning to God in fear, David faces Goliath with faith (1 Samuel 1-7).	Do not tell God you have a big problem; tell your problem you have a big God.
Satan seeks to bind men, Jesus does what benefits them (2 Nephi 26:22-23).	Satan wants to bind us, but Jesus wants to bless us.
Jesus points out that the widow gave more to God with her two mites than the rich men gave with their riches (Mark 12:41-43).	God cares more about the intent of our hearts than he does the value of our gifts.
The lame man asked Peter and John for a handout, but they healed him instead (Acts 3:1-7).	Like many people, the lame man wants what will <i>help</i> him; God wants what will <i>heal</i> him.

Robinson (2001) suggested, is there grammatical structure. He argued that a well-stated generalization often possesses two essential elements: a *subject* and a *compliment*. The subject (often in the form of a phrase) answers the question, “What is he talking about?” The compliment completes the subject by answering the question, “What is he saying about what he is talking about?” For example, “The test of a person’s character is what it takes to stop him.” The phrase, “What is the test of a person’s character?” acts as the subject. “What it takes to stop him” is the compliment (Robinson, 2001, p. 41). Therefore, the strength of a generalization is not in the subject of the sentence but in its predication.

Overall, whether generalizations come directly from the text or preachers imply them, if they are based scripturally, sound contemporary, and feel relevant, then they stand a better chance of appealing to listeners.

Applicable to Listeners

In relation to what preachers teach, another characteristic that repeatedly surfaces in the literature is *application* (Chapell, 2004, 2005a; Davis, 1958; Robinson, 2001; Sunukjian, 2007; P. Wilson, 1999, 2004). The term “application” relates to how the message of the sermon applies to listeners. A sermon message that is applicable, answers a few basic questions for listeners: “Why is this scripture important to me?” “What does this scripture require of me?” and “How can I accomplish what this scripture asks?” (Chapell, 2005a; Low, 2006; Sunukjian, 2007; Veerman, 2005). Robinson (2001) observed that people rarely lose sleep worrying about biblical facts—what happened to the Jebusites, Perrizites, and Canannites—as much as they lay awake worrying about gas

prices, crop failures, marriage problems, and wayward children. Listeners want to know the scriptures, but even more, they want to know scriptural truths that will help them cope with life (Sunukjian, 2007). They want to know how God solved problems in the past, but more importantly, how he solves them today (Veerman, 2005).

Centered on Christ

Arthurs (2005a) stated that if preacher's want their sermons to effect change in listener's lives, then the sermon's content must center on Christ, and not merely center on humankind. When presenting Christocentric content, Greidanus (1999) admonished preachers to show listeners "that there is a way to the center even from the farthest point on the periphery. For a sermon without Christ is no sermon" (p. 2). C. Miller (2006) said that sermon content that focuses on Jesus tends to elicit a greater response in listeners than content that remains theologically correct yet centers elsewhere. Centering the sermon's message on Christ implies that the preacher proclaims some aspect of Jesus' person, work, or teaching so that people can trust, believe, love, follow, and obey him (Greidanus, 1999).

Though notable theorists like Greidanus (1999), and Kaiser (1981) suggested centering sermon content on Christ, Chapell (2005a) reminded preachers that they should never impose him on the text. Some preachers, he observed, believe they must find Christ hiding behind every bush on the plain and under every rock in the Old Testament. Sometimes, they allegorize to the point that the water flowing from the rock struck by Moses with his staff becomes the water flowing from Jesus' pierced side, trees become crosses, oil becomes blood, and every mountain becomes Calvary. Not all sermons need

mention Bethlehem, Golgotha, or Gethsemane to remain Christ-centered and effect change in listener's lives. They merely need to explicate how the text reveals God's plans, purposes, work, and divine nature.

Even if the text focuses on a biblical character other than Christ, theorists suggest ways to make Christ central in the content (Chapell, 2005a; Greidanus, 1999; P. Wilson, 1995b). For example, if preaching chapters about John the Baptist, P. Wilson (1995b) said that one would want to avoid focusing the sermon solely upon John the Baptist, for he is not the source of hope. Christ is the source of hope to which John points, and so should preachers. Some scripture verses unquestionably encourage preachers to focus on characters (e.g., Joseph of Egypt); but P. Wilson noted that preachers should ensure that they not only point to his moral character, but they also point to the *source* of his character that the scriptures commend (Chapell, 2005a).

Just as preachers should help listeners see Christ as the source of good that inspired noble deeds among humankind anciently, preachers should also want them to see Christ as the source of inspiration today. When preachers want to uphold a person's good deed as an example, rather than ascribe that deed solely to the person, P. Wilson (1995b) admonished preachers to ascribe it to Christ. He is the source that empowers an exemplary Christian to perform all good things. For example, if a preacher enumerates Mother Teresa's selfless acts in the slums of Calcutta, and ascribes her actions to her noble character, listeners might leave feeling they pale in comparison to her virtuous qualities and meritable acts. If the preacher emphasizes, however, that God works *through* her, listeners do not feel a sense of failure, but of empowerment. The same God that worked

through Mother Teresa can work through them.

Overall, though the sermon prescribes what Christ would have humankind do, it is not so much about what humankind should do as much as it is about what God will do, has done, and is doing in the listener's lives today. He is the center of the sermon, which as Miller (C. Miller, 2006) observed, means that Christ' values permeate all the sermon has to say. He not only is the source of goodness but also is the goodness in all the preacher has to say.

Infused with Hope

Homiletic theory suggests that preachers should infuse the content of every sermon with hope (Chapell, 2005a; McDill, 1994; C. Miller, 2006; Mitchell, 1990; Sunukjian, 2007; P. Wilson, 1995b, 1999, 2004). Rather than merely proclaiming obedience and moral standards, preachers should proclaim the source, reason, and the effects of obedience and moral standards.

P. Wilson (1995b) contended that preachers weary listeners if they moralize too often and turn every biblical text into something listeners must obey or a standard they must keep. When preaching Jesus cleansing the temple, he believed that preachers moralize if they use the temple experience to illustrate why parishioners should clean their churches. P. Wilson observed that this kind of moralizing tends to reduce Jesus to an example, and preaching of this kind reduces faith to a matter of mere obedience to rules, or worse, to a "laundry list" of things to do (p. 195). For preaching is about good news, not just good advice; it is about God's enabling power not just the listeners obligatory duty (C. Miller, 2006).

Even when behaviors encouraged by the scriptures are reasonable, scriptural, and doctrinally correct, if sermons never move from expounding standards of obedience to explaining the source, motives, and the results of obedience, they might undermine hope by focusing listener attention on the listener's problems rather than on God's solutions (Chapell, 2005a; Frazee, 2005). As P. Wilson (1999, p. 23) noted, "True, the drug addict must stop taking drugs, the tax cheat must be honest, the greedy must be generous, the promiscuous must be chaste, and the powerful must be humble. Yet if as preachers, we stop here, then we omit the good news, which is the power of God's love" (p. 23). Mitchell (1990) agreed, noting that preachers should never use the pulpit as a "whipping post" (p. 62). Preachers leave listeners worse off than before if they devote more than a third of their sermons to "don'ts" instead of "do's."

In his book *Twelve Essential Skills For Great Preaching*, McDill (1994) observed that too often preachers prepare sermons that are the "do-better" variety (p. 195). He defined do-better preaching as an approach where the preacher sees the congregation as falling short of the mark and the preacher's job as straightening them out. Common terms that mark do-better preaching is *must*, *ought*, and *should*. So rather than telling listeners what they *should* do, preachers should tell them what they *can* do in Christ. McDill agreed:

How can the preacher overcome the habit of constantly saying *we need to*, *we ought*, *we must*, and *we should*? The best term to use for...challenging your audience is *can*. To say, "You can," is to call for a faith response to the credibility of God. Because of all we have said about God, you *can*.... Instead of telling the people what they ought to do, we go beyond *ought* to *can*. Whereas *ought*, *must* and *should* give obligation, *can* gives promise. "You ought to love your neighbor" becomes a new and exciting idea when it is "you can love your neighbor." This change of emphasis...places the emphasis on faith, believing you can do

something because of what God will do. Every *ought* in your sermon application can be translated into a *can*. (pp. 195-196).

By focusing on what God *can* do instead of what listeners *should* do, listeners leave the sermon focusing on what they can do with God and through God, rather than merely upon what they should do by themselves and for themselves.

Even when a sermon centers on biblical text, profound generalizations, personal application, God's divine nature, and hope, yet the preacher fails to arrange the sermon content into a purposeful and functional manner, theorists maintain that the sermon might fail altogether. This is why theorists assert that this next category is an essential component in an ideal sermon.

Arrangement

A sermon's content is essential. However, without a logical arrangement of that content, the sermon becomes a labyrinth of ideas where listeners get lost and lose interest. Like a stone arch, a logical arrangement of ideas is stronger than a heap of ideas thrown out to listeners in disconnected, illogical ways (Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922). An ordered arrangement is an essential element in the sermon whether the preacher organizes by way of rational logic centering on a central idea, or by narrative logic centering on a plot (L. Hogan & Reid, 1999). Robinson (2001) pointed out that a proper arrangement provides a sermon with an organization that gives it a sense of unity, order, and progress. Thus, arranging the sermon's message is not simply a perfunctory step in homiletics, but rather a contributing force that gains and holds interest, and shapes listener experience and faith (Craddock, 1985).

Whether preachers shape their sermons into deductive, propositional arguments or inductive, narrative plots, homileticians suggest that the sermon's arrangement possess unity, movement, text-centeredness, and purpose. Before bringing into focus these specific elements, it is important to share with the reader the nature and function of deductive/inductive arrangements.

Nature and Function of Deductive and Inductive Arrangements

Whether homileticians call it the sermon's *arrangement*, *shape*, or *form*, those synonymous terms refer to the way the sermon moves listener thought in either deductive or inductive directions (Chapell, 1993, 2005a; Robinson, 2001; Sunukjian, 2007; Tisdale, 1996; P. Wilson, 1995b). Although some theorists urge preachers to shape sermons either exclusively deductive or inductive, most see the advantages of merging both forms (Allen, 1992; Chapell, 1993; C. Miller, 2006; Robinson, 2001; P. Wilson, 1995b). Since form follows function, form is contingent on the learning objective the preacher hopes to achieve. To help the reader discern between both deductive and inductive arrangements, it is helpful to point out key features in each.

Chapell (2005a) remarked that deductive sermons (see Figure 3), often called propositional sermons, move listener thought from a general truth to a particular application or experience of that truth (Paul's common approach in his epistles). Influenced by the rationalists of the Renaissance, the deductive form which is sometimes called a three-point, point form, or propositional sermon, is essentially a tightly reasoned argument (L. Hogan & Reid, 1999; P. Wilson, 1995b). Though varying in form, generally

theorists describe it as an arrangement where preachers state a central proposition near the sermon's beginning, then move from point to point to build a strong argument, while ideas related to the central idea become lesser propositions that help gradually establish and reinforce the argument. In the sermon's body, preachers take apart the central idea to analyze, prove, or apply it (Robinson, 2001).

Allen (1992) observed that the strength of a deductive arrangement is found in its clarity. Because the truth emerges early and clearly, listeners grasp the truth upfront rather than later (Sunukjian, 2007). By stating the general truth up front, preachers give the concept a chance to mature in listener's minds. As the concept develops in the listener's minds, preachers help them discover its meaning and relevance. One disadvantage of the deductive arrangement is that it can weaken anticipation at the start (Larson, 2005e; Sunukjian, 2005). By presenting the concept at the beginning, preachers run the risk of undermining suspense, tension, and movement towards the climax of the message. However, what the deductive approach might lack in anticipation, it makes up for in clarity.

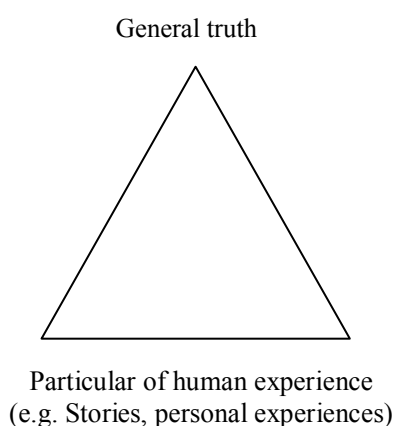


Figure 3. The deductive sermon.

Inductive sermons (see Figure 4), often called narrative sermons, move thought from particular stories or illustrations to a general truth (Jesus' most typical approach in the Gospels). Though some theorists call them narrative sermons, that does not necessarily imply that the sermons are stories—though they can be and often are. The term “narrative” simply refers to the idea that the sermons move with anticipation the same way a plot moves in a story.

Craddock's (2001) publication, *As One Without Authority*, is often cited as the book that helped shift the homiletic arrangement of a sermon from an exclusively deductive, rationalistic form to a form that was either exclusively inductive or possessing an inductive/deductive mix (L. Hogan & Reid, 1999). Unlike the deductive sermon, the inductive arrangement begins with the particulars of human experience then moves to a general truth (Broadus, 1897/2005; Chapell, 2005a; Craddock, 2001; Robinson, 2001; Sunukjian, 2007). Aesop's Fables—stories ending with moral truths—would serve as an example of an inductive shaped message.

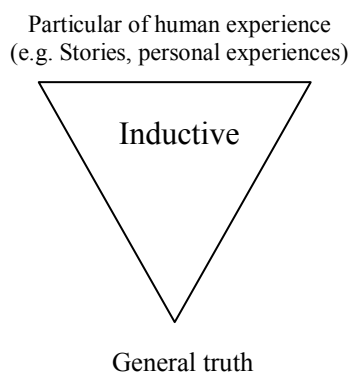


Figure 4. The inductive sermon.

One advantage of the inductive approach is the way its central idea distills upon listener minds without stating it plainly. And sometimes, stating something directly is simply not as potent as having listeners discover it for themselves (Robinson, 2001). Another advantage with the inductive approach is how it keeps listeners in suspense since it gradually moves from “itch to scratch, from issue to answer, from conflict to resolution, [and] from ambiguity to closure” (Lowry, 2001a, p. 118). At the conclusion, they have not so much as heard the sermon as much as they have participated in it (Allen, 1992). The inductive arrangement works well if listeners struggle accepting the message or question its importance. It also works well among listeners immersed in a culture dominated by the media (Robinson, 2001).

The challenge of the inductive arrangement is that a preacher must pay special attention to oral clarity to help listeners keep the preacher’s train of thought as the story progresses toward the general truth. However, to create a clear sense of direction without revealing the general truth upfront, preachers can offer a preview question that indicates the direction the sermon will go without disclosing the principle it will illuminate. For example, Bain (2004, p. 100) observed how a philosophy professor presenting a lecture on epistemology began his class by asking, “Does anyone here know anything for sure?” Likewise, when preachers ask provocative questions they arrest congregation attention without revealing the overarching principle.

Even though some preachers choose to move either exclusively in a deductive or inductive direction, many preachers are practicing a middle way and choosing not go either exclusively deductive or inductive (Allen, 1992; C. Miller, 2006; Robinson, 2001;

P. Wilson, 1995b). They might teach one principle inductively, then the second deductively, or vice versa. Whether one chooses a deductive or inductive arrangement depends on the needs of the listener, the content of the message, and the purpose of the sermon.

Quality Characteristics in Sermon Arrangements

By describing the nature and function of the arrangement, the reader can now better understand the parts of the sermon arrangement and how they compliment the sermon design. Though theorists differ in opinion as to what they consider best practice in arranging the sermon's components, four characteristics consistently appear throughout the literature and form the foundation for a consensus.

The arrangement must be unified by a central idea. The parts in the sermon's arrangement become a unit, a single whole—the parts relate to the whole, and the whole relates to the parts (Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922). The central idea becomes the connective tissue that binds the supporting ideas. It is the seed out of which the whole structure grows—whether it be an expression, idea, anecdote, illustration, story, or transition—the sermon has a single point to make, and any element that detracts from that point gets tossed out (C. Miller, 2006, p. 163). Otherwise, thoughts in the sermon become disconnected. These disconnected thoughts are like a “whirl of sparks,” perhaps beautiful, but they do not make a message; they make three or four sermonettes all preached at one time (Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922, p. 406; Robinson, 2001). Nevertheless, when the

preacher connects ideas to the central theme, the theme fuses a whirl of ideas into a beam of light.

A central idea provides a purpose and direction to the sermon so preachers can avoid meandering down tangential paths. It also provides a roadmap for listeners to follow the preacher's logic (Craddock, 1985).

The arrangement moves listener thought forward. Since people think in orderly patterns and make logical, sequential connections between ideas, homiletic theory suggests structuring outlines in logical, progressive, and natural orders that move learner thought forward (Allen, 1992; Broadus, 1897/2005; Chapell, 2005a; Craddock, 1985; Lowry, 2001a; C. Miller, 2006; Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922; P. Wilson, 1995b).

Communication involves movement; people speak of A, then B, and then C. Just as one part in a story's arrangement can lead readers to anticipate another part, so can one idea in a sermon's arrangement lead listeners to anticipate another idea (Burke, 1968).

Preachers can select from a bevy of conceptual arrangements that move thought forward from one idea to another. For example, their sermon arrangements can move thought through *theology* by moving from judgment to mercy; through *definition* by moving from facet to facet; through *chronology*, by moving from event to event; through *cause or effect* by moving from if to then; through *space* by moving from lesser to greater; through *emotion* by moving from beginning to climax; through *accumulation* by moving from this to that; through *antithesis* by moving from black to white; and through *category* by moving from abstract to concrete (Chapell, 2005a; P. Wilson, 1995b).

P. Wilson (1995b, 2004) observed that as the arrangement moves listener thought

forward, it can also develop ideas in listener's minds so that the sermon reaches some objective or climax. This is especially true in narrative preaching where sermons begin with a problem and close with a solution, or begin with a question and close with an answer. As preachers present a compelling issue, suspense rises in anticipation of the answer (Mitchell, 1990).

Whether preachers structure the sermon arrangement to create an experience or enhance learning, listener thought needs to go somewhere. Something needs to happen. People need to make logical, successive connections between ideas while at the same time anticipating each new idea.

The arrangement has a form that derives from the text. Biblical content and sermon form are two indivisible elements of the same thing (Craddock, 2005; Davis, 1958; P. Wilson, 1995b). Though each is an inherent part of the other, the biblical text has the major role—if not the only role—in molding the sermon's shape (Kaiser, 1981). The biblical text can impose on the sermon's form, but the sermon's form should not impose on the text lest preachers create what P. Wilson (1999) called *static unity*—an arrangement that conforms to standards that do not originate from the particular work itself. To impose a three-point sermon, for instance, on a two-point, either/or text like, “choose you this day whom ye will serve” imposes form on text (Joshua 24:15). This muddles the preacher's message and keeps the sermon arrangement from becoming an organic entity that grows out of the biblical text.

In traditional homiletics, the *topical sermon* and the *textual sermon* are classic examples of sermon arrangements derived from the text. The topical sermon takes its

central idea from a biblical passage but stops there. So the sermon's divisions come from the subject's nature rather than the text's distinctions (Chapell, 2005a). The textual sermon, however, not only derives the central theme from the biblical text, but it also derives its main points. Therefore, the divisions of the text determine the divisions of the sermon and the union of the divisions determines the central idea. Overall, whether one chooses the topical form or the textual form depends on the text and objective of the sermon. Both forms have their advantages. The topical sermon preserves the unity of the sermon; the textual sermon promotes understanding of the text.

According to theorists, the text's *genre* should also play a part in shaping the sermon (Greidanus, 1999; Kaiser, 1981; Long, 1989). Genre refers to a text's style, shape, grammar, and rhetorical function (Long, 1989). Some examples of Bible genres are parable, wisdom, poetry, narrative, and doxology (scripture that praises God, e.g., Psalms) to name a few. Because each of these genres possesses a distinctive shape and style, preachers should modify their approach to meet the needs of the text. For example, if the biblical text is a narrative form, then preachers should shape the sermon inductively to follow the storyline of the text rather than use a didactic, three-point deductive form that imposes its own structure on the text (Greidanus, 1988). But preachers should not replicate every detail of the text as much as they want to regenerate its impact (Long, 1989).

They regenerate its impact when the message of the sermon matches the rhetorical dynamics of the text. Long (1989) suggested that rhetorical dynamics refers to the effect the literary features of the Bible produce in a reader. Literary features are in the text;

rhetorical dynamics—stimulated by the text—are in the reader. Though the punch line is a literary feature of a joke, the laughter caused by the punch line is the rhetorical dynamic. Jokes are genres that help people laugh, proverbs help people think, and psalms help people feel. Generally, preachers should try to create that same dynamic in their sermons. Literary form, however, is only good as far as it is functional in helping preachers accomplish their purpose.

The arrangement has a central purpose. Davis (1958) declared that the functional form of the sermon is the form a sermon takes to better accomplish the purpose for which it is preached. For this reason, theorists suggest that early on in their preparation preachers establish what they hope their sermons will accomplish for listeners (Chapell, 1993; L. Hogan & Reid, 1999; Lowry, 2001b). Whether preachers intend to help listeners understand, apply, experience, or empathize, their learning objective should guide each decision in the planning process (O'Day, 2005). The objective molds, shapes, sculpts, and tears away every part that does not add to or accomplish the purpose for which they preach.

One learning objective preachers hope to achieve is to promote biblical understanding (L. Hogan & Reid, 1999). Sometimes preachers seek to facilitate an encounter with God. Preachers create this encounter by arranging their material so that it identifies a universal need in listeners, then it presents a plan that satisfies that need. To help listeners encounter God, preachers can begin with the biblical text and then apply that text to the listeners. Harry Emmerson Fosdick believed that preachers create encounters with God when they help listeners recognize the spiritual and emotional voids

in their lives that only God can fill. He stated the following.

Every sermon should have for its main business the solving of some problem—a vital, important problem, puzzling minds, burdening consciences, distracting lives.... This endeavor to help people solve their spiritual problems is a sermon's only justifiable aim.... Any congregation ought to begin recognizing that the preacher is tackling something of vital concern to them.... They should see that he is engaged in a serious and practical endeavor to state fairly a problem which actually exists in their lives and then to throw what light on it he can. (Crocker & Fosdick, 1971, p. 226)

Though P. Wilson's (1999) trouble/grace form possessed a similar objective as Fosdick's, Wilson presents a more tangible structure. He suggests arranging sermons in the following shape or "moves" as he calls them: (a) trouble in the biblical world, (b) trouble in the modern world, (c) God's grace in the biblical world, (d) God's grace in the modern world. This latter form not only explains the truth, but also it helps learners encounter the God that created it.

Hogan and Reid (1999) also observed that preachers can shape their sermons to create an experience. Though this third preaching intention uses language to help listeners experience God, to experience him sufficiently, preachers must shape their sermons into inductive, plot-centered arrangements. African American preaching uses this arrangement so that the sermon moves from conflict to resolution similarly to a play or movie. As it approaches resolution, like a symphony whose movements build to the last crescendo, the sermon reaches an apex. It reaches a moment that black preachers describe as a celebration, resolution, or "good news" moment (Mitchell, 1990, p. 34).

Overall, homiletic theory suggests that the ideal sermon possesses a structure where the primary concepts pivot around a central idea, move listener thought forward in time and space, and actuate listener minds toward some objective. However, arrangement

is not the only feature that distinguishes ideal sermons from mediocre. Sermons must also possess an effective introduction, smooth transitions, and a concise conclusion.

Introduction, Transition, and Conclusion

Chapell (2005a) asserted that all sermons have an introduction, transitions, and a conclusion. Whether or not preachers intentionally add them to their sermons when they present their messages, their first words introduce their sermons, their last words conclude them, and the material in between links the beginning and the end with transitions. Depending upon how preachers design these three components will determine whether they hurt or help the sermon.

Introduction

Most theorists agree that before preachers can move listener thought forward to the body of the sermon, listeners must believe that the journey is worth the step (Chapell, 2005a; Davis, 1958; Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922; Robinson, 2001). Often, listeners want to know where they are going and why they should go there. Chapell (2005a) urged preachers never to assume that just because they find excitement in their sermon material their listeners will too. He made the following observation.

The weekly assaults on the realities of faith from family, friend, and foe; the weariness prompted by work stress; the overdone Saturday-night fun; the competing influences of the entertainment and media; the seeming irrelevance of prophets and apostles dead for at least two millennia; and the mere redundancy of a lifetime of Sunday-morning rituals combine to make congregational interest in any message a minor miracle that no minister should ever take for granted. (p. 228)

Preachers should never assume that just because listeners *should* find interest in

the scriptures, they *will* find interest. Hogan (1987) noted that preachers come to their listeners having spent hours on the subject of their sermons. They have been thinking about it for days, weeks, or perhaps even years. However, some of the listeners have never given the subject a second thought. So in the introduction, Hogan stated, “You must enter their world and persuade them to go with you into the world [of scriptural truth]” (p. 1). Theorists believe that preachers can persuade listeners to begin the sermon journey if their introductions (a) arrest attention, (b) introduce the subject (c) are brief, (d) are separate from extemporaneous remarks, and (e) are free of apologies.

Arrest attention. As Stott (1982) pointed out, good introductions pique interest in listeners. Arousing interest is of supreme importance to the sermon because as W. Taylor (1859) noted, too often the minds of congregants are preoccupied in reveries of worry, responsibilities, and mistakes. Few listeners have the capacity to give their preachers undivided attention unless preachers snatch it with something of interest or worth. It is not so much that listeners come to the pews indifferent about the truth, as much as they come careless about it (Broadus, 1897/2005). However, if preachers win attention by evoking interest in someone or something, that attention becomes the lever by which they can move the masses (Davis, 1958; W. Taylor, 1859).

To create an introduction that arrests attention, Sunukian (2007) and Stott (1982) recommended that preachers begin with the listeners before they begin with scriptural text. In other words, preachers should begin with elements in Table 3 before they introduce the background of the text, and certainly, before they read the text. Table 3 furnishes four authors who provide 38 different types of introductions. Chapell (2005a)

Table 3

The Different Types of Introductions

Blackwood (1948)	Chapell (2005a)	Robinson (2001)	Sunukjian (2007)
The text	Human interest account	Paradox	Personal story
Biblical context	Simple assertion	Familiar thought	Recent event
Dramatic description	Startling statement	Rhetorical question	Startling statement
A topic	Provocative question	Startling fact	Contemporary issue
A problem	Catalog	Startling statistic	Common need
Direct statement	Interesting quotation	Provocative comment	Contradiction
Striking quotation	Striking statistic	Humor	Biblical difficulty
Illustration	Biblical account	The text	
News item	Parables	Story	
Cartoon	Pithy poetry		
Life situation	Object lessons		

suggested that preachers turn to the scriptural passage only after they adequately stir up a desire in listeners to proceed forward, and only after they sufficiently orientate listeners to what they will find.

Preachers also arrest attention when they help listeners see why they should listen (Edwards, 2005b). Too often, Chapell (2005a) noted, preachers indicate what the sermon will be about, but omit explaining why it is important. Early in the sermon, preachers need to address a need that listeners perceive as relevant (Stanley & Jones, 2006). When they do so, Greidanus (1999) observed, preachers assure listeners that they will talk to them about them. Addressing the listener's needs stirs up questions, probes problems, pinpoints needs, and unveils vital issues to which the biblical passage speaks. As listeners realize their preachers have answers to life's real problems, they become motivated to listen and learn (Chapell, 1993, 2005a).

One way preachers can indicate why listeners should listen, Lowry (2001a) asserted, is by upsetting the “equilibrium” (p. 28). Upsetting the equilibrium is simply stating a problem that needs a solution. For example, beginning a sermon with “Today I want to talk about love” is dull indeed, because it does not state a problem. However, the following improved statement presents a problem and creates a desire to hear the solution: “The challenge we face is that too often, we offer our hand in friendship only to pull it back bitten. How can we continue to love others that want to hurt us?”

When preachers do identify a need by stating a problem that needs a solution, they should avoid presenting that problem in general terms as “though there is a problem out there somewhere that someone should be concerned about some time” (Chapell, 2005a, p. 232). Rather, needs must be specific and pointed (Blackwood, 1948). Preachers say, “All people are mortal” and get nothing more than a blank stares from listeners. They announce “Mr. Brown’s son is dying,” and the people grow interested (Craddock, 2001, p. 51).

Introduce the subject. Along with evoking interest, introductions should also lead listeners into the subject of the sermon (Chapell, 2005a; Davis, 1958; Stott, 1982). Adams (1986) asserted that if the introduction fails to do this, it fails altogether. Davis (1958) suggested that the introduction present the subject as quickly as possible to ensure that listeners follow the preacher’s train of thought. The introduction should make the subject clear, anticipate the whole sermon, hint to the sermon’s destination, and lead naturally to the first point (P. Wilson, 1999). Because the introduction relates to the central subject, preachers should avoid stories that evoke interest but show little

relevance to the sermon's subject (Davis, 1958). Unrelated stories muddle understanding because they lead listener thought down a false path. False starts often come in the form of anecdotes that are funny but unrelated to the central theme. Listeners feel duped that the perceived subject matter was merely an attempt to seem funny, insightful, or impressive. In addition, when preachers begin with something intriguing yet misleading, they create an extra task: not only do they have to win back attention from interest gained in the wrong subject, but they also have to win interest again in the right subject. Chapel (2005a) warns preachers who make this mistake can foster resentment and distrust in listeners.

Rather than lead listeners down false paths, Davis (1958) suggested that the introduction answer one or more of the following questions: "What is my preacher going to talk about today?" and "What in general will my preacher say about it?" (p. 188). Answering those questions is important since the introduction is the listener's first encounter with the central idea; and it offers a preview of the sermon by promising to deliver in the body of the talk what the preacher promised in the introduction (Allen, 1992; Blackwood, 1948; Willhite, 2001; P. Wilson, 1995b). This preview helps listeners anticipate the unfolding progression of thought. Therefore, whatever the subject of the sermon, the introduction should relate to it and should be void of any foreign matter that is separate from the central idea.

Preachers can preview the sermon's subject either deductively by presenting the central idea or inductively by raising the topic or a question the sermon answers. Either way brings "the listener to a sharp and concise feeling of 'Oh, OK, I know what we're

after” (Sunukjian, 2007, p. 199). This does not mean, however, that the introduction must plunge listeners into the heart of the sermon, reveal too much up front, and undermine anticipation. It does mean that the introduction should point in the direction the preachers will take (P. Wilson, 1995b).

Whichever way preachers choose to introduce the sermon’s subject, they should make the most of it because an engaging opening is a clue that what follows may be worth everyone’s time (Robinson, 2001).

Are brief. One distinctive feature essential in almost any introduction relates to the introduction’s length. Of the 13 theorists who dedicated a significant portion of their writings to the length of an introduction, eight theorists believed that the introduction should be brief (Buttrick, 1987; Chapell, 2005a; Davis, 1958; Edwards, 2005b; Low, 2006; Robinson, 2001; Stanley & Jones, 2006; P. Wilson, 1999). Shedd (1867, p. 158) noted that “where one sermon is faulty from being too abruptly introduced, 100 are faulty from a long and tiresome preface.”

Five of the eight theorists were specific about how and why the introduction should be brief. To Chapell (2005a), brevity suggested a sentence length no more than three or four standard-length paragraphs. Otherwise, the introduction begins to wander aimlessly into ineffectiveness. P. Wilson (1995b) perceived brevity as 1-2 paragraphs that state the sermon’s relevance and destination. Buttrick (1987) interpreted brevity as even shorter when he suggested that the length consist of only 7 to 12 sentences. He stated that introductions can scarcely function in less than 7 sentences, and more than 12 sentences, listeners grow impatient.

Davis (1958) suggested the length of the introduction in units of time. In a 20-25 minute talk, he advised preachers to take no more than two minutes to capture attention and introduce the subject. Low (2006) merely suggested keeping the introduction shorter than the body of the sermon. Though Stanley's writings omitted a specific length, he did recommend that preachers quickly present the question the sermon will answer, the tension it will ease, or the mystery it will solve. Overall, some theorists prescribe a specified amount of time and some a specific amount of space, and the majority agree that the introduction be brief.

Separate from extemporaneous remarks. Besides creating a need in listeners to hear the sermon, preachers should also avoid confusing the introduction with the adlib remarks they make before they introduce their sermons. Though it might put listeners at ease commenting on last night's potluck dinner, or the Super Bowl, neither preachers nor listeners should equate these occurrences with the introduction (Chapell, 2005a; C. Miller, 2006). To keep extemporaneous remarks separate, silence should follow the adlib remarks before beginning the introduction. Hostettler (1986) observed seasoned preachers as those absent of the fear of silence, especially at that moment prior to the sermon's opening sentence—a moment that distinguishes offhand remarks from the actual introduction.

Free of apologies. Finally, theorists advise preachers never to open their sermons with an apology (Blackwood, 1948; Broadus, 1897/2005; Robinson, 2001). When preachers use an apology, Robinson (2001) said they hope to win sympathy; however, at best, they get pity; and it is doubtful that preachers can persuade congregations who feel

sorry for them. If preachers come to the pulpit unprepared, they should let their listeners discover it on their own, but most often, they will never know.

Transition

Chapell (2005a) observed that an introduction presents the message and a conclusion wraps it up. Each component has a separate, vital function in the sermon. However, if the components remain too segregated from each other, the sermon's components and ideas seem disjointed and incompatible. That is why transitions are an essential part of the sermon's structure. Transitions link all the components and ideas in the sermon together in the same way that a freight train links cars (C. Miller, 2006). Broadus (1897/2005) reported that one of the most distinguished preachers of America, Richard Fuller, once remarked that transitions in the sermon present the best evidence of one's oratorical skill.

Chapel (2005a) indicated that transitions are vitally important because they help listeners follow the preacher's train of thought. They help listeners sense when the preacher moves from one idea to another. When listeners hear transitions, the transitions signal that they have arrived at a conceptual turn in the road. It signals a new direction. And, it does more than indicate where the sermon is going, it also indicates where the sermon has been. Robinson (2001) asserted that transitions are important because congregations cannot see the preacher's outlines. Carefully constructed transitions help listeners get their bearings when they lose track of where they have been (Stanley & Jones, 2006).

One way preachers make transitions between the integral parts of their sermon is

through *transitional expressions*. Transitional expressions splice together sermon components and ideas. Chapel (2005a) advocated that the phrase, “Not only..., but also...,” is a foundational transition (p. 253). That phrase points thoughts backward to an earlier idea, points listener thoughts forward to the next idea, and then yokes the ideas together.

To help preachers select a suitable transitional expression to match the kind of transition they intend to make, Craddock (2001, p. 123) advised preachers to conceptualize the sermon as a trip in a car. The transitions mark directional changes. “There will be slow turns (‘however,’ ‘and yet’), sharp turns (‘but,’ ‘on the other hand’), straight stretches (‘and’), uphill drives (‘moreover,’ ‘in addition,’ ‘also,’ ‘beyond this,’ and ‘in fact’), and arrivals at the top (‘so’ and ‘therefore,’ ‘now’). By becoming aware of these transitional expressions, preachers can manage and control movement in the sermon—its direction, acceleration, and destination.

Conclusion

Just as introductions open the way for the sermon, the conclusion brings it to an end (Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922). Both Chapel (2005a) and Broadus (1897/2005) attested that a sermon with a riveting introduction should end with an even more captivating conclusion. Chapel (2005a) purported that a well-constructed sermon that crescendos to a climactic ending will leave listeners remembering the sermon’s conclusion more than any other component of the sermon.

The great orators of Greece and Rome paid much attention to their final words, for they felt those words were their final struggle, their last supreme effort to walk away

victorious. Preaching theorists would agree with the ancients because theorists believe the conclusion is the point where preachers tell listeners what they want them to do with what they now know (Sunukjian, 2007). Theorists suggest that ideal conclusions will (a) bring the sermon full circle, (b) recap main points, (c) tell listeners what to do, (d) end after announced, (e) end hopeful, (f) be brief, (g) position strongest sentence last, and (h) have a high level of personal language.

Comes full circle. One of the primary functions of the conclusion is to help listeners orient where they have been, where they are, and where they should go (Myers, 1988). Davis (1958) keenly observed that the conclusion looks back at the whole subject and recapitulates the points made, not for the sake of repeating them, but in order to bind them into a unity of the whole idea. The conclusion gives listeners a final view of the central idea in relation to the rest of the sermon. For Chapell (2005a) and Goldsworthy (2000), it is the moment where listeners come closest to seeing the parts in light of the whole. Preachers enable listeners to see this overall perspective by returning to the introduction and completing a story, echoing an earlier thought, resolving a tension, or answering a question posed at the beginning. In this way, the sermon comes full circle giving it a sense of closure and indicating conscientious preparation on the part of the preachers.

Recaps main points. In a sense, the conclusion is a kind of review. However, as Broadus (1897/2005) stated, it is a “recollection...revived, not the speech repeated” (p. 300). Giving an extensive summary is as unnecessary as it is tedious. To avoid an excessive summary, Edwards (2005a) suggested merely hitting the sermon’s highlights,

otherwise, preachers may exhaust any interest previously generated.

Tells listeners what to do. A good conclusion not only turns listener's thoughts backward to the sermon's highlights, it also inspires them to carry the truth forward. Unlike a good introduction that gets listeners ready to hear, a good conclusion gets them ready to act (Broadus, 1897/2005; Stott, 1982). Edwards (2005a) insisted that the conclusion exhort listeners to embrace the action for which the sermon calls. Unlike essays or lectures, Blackwood (1948) asserted that sermons should lead to action by inspiring listeners to think, "In the light of this message what does the Lord wish me to do?" (p. 164) Although preachers should disperse application throughout the sermon, Edwards (2005a) noted that it is in the conclusion where the most distinct and most compelling call for a response should occur. It is in the conclusion where preachers suggest ways that their congregations transfer their new awareness of the topic into their everyday lives (Allen, 1992). In the foreword section *Of Preaching that Changes Lives* (Fabarez, 2002), John MacArthur (1992) made the following injunction.

After you have studied and taught a doctrine, there is always *therefore*. A major part of the preachers task is to highlight the *therefore* and press on his hearers their duty to obey. In other words, truly biblical preaching must be both didactic and practical...doctrine without exhortation is lame, being deprived of the whole point. The preacher who delivers a theological lecture...then sits down without pressing the practical ramifications of the truth on his hearers has not finished his task. (p. ix)

Davis said that the "therefore" portion of the conclusion can take the form of exhortation, entreaty, warning, appeal, encouragement, consolation, invitation, or plea. Whatever form it takes, it is a requisite because a sermon that merely explains God's word without calling people to respond to his word, it is not true preaching, for God's word always

demands a human response (Fabarez, 2002).

This is why a conclusion is more than a mere summary. A summary merely speaks to the mind, but a conclusion appeals to the will. Thus, after preachers review the sermon's points, they should follow the review with something that leads listeners to act, to move forward. Preachers should never end the sermon simply looking back with a review (Davis, 1958).

Ends after announced. The conclusion should do what it is supposed to do—conclude. Too often, preachers tell their congregations they intend to conclude, then fail to keep their promise (Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922; Robinson, 2001). They raise emotions, incite the will, exhort to action, and then launch into more concepts and drag out the ending to the point that listeners grow irritated and anxious. They say, “in conclusion,” “and one last thought before I close,” or “finally,” then they proceed to exposit in great length and detail another concept. Chapel (2005a) and Broadus (1897/2005) say this tends to create anticlimactic endings.

By the end of the sermon, preachers need not launch into further explanation if they have previously presented and adequately developed all relative concepts (Edwards, 2005a). Rather than present residual thoughts and risk cluttering understanding, Pattison (1898) counsels preachers to “leave well alone, and to cease-fire” after their “ammunition is gone. Congregations know blank cartridges and they are not afraid of them” (p. 184). Thus, the conclusion should end promptly, and bring a sense of completeness and closure (Blackwood, 1948; Low, 2006; Robinson, 2001; P. Wilson, 1995b). Concluding the conclusion, however, is only part of the distinctive nature of quality conclusions.

Ends hopeful. Preachers should also conclude in a hopeful manner (Blackwood, 1948). Even if the sermon must deal with solemn subjects like death, divorce, repentance, or sexual immorality, the final words should ring with hope. As Chapel (2005a) expressively stated, “if Scripture requires you to take people to the mat, do so but do not abandon them there” (p. 249). Granted, some scriptural passages lead to negative messages, but Edwards (2005a) and Sunukian (2005) suggested turning a negative message into an encouraging one, especially if preachers assume that most churches are filled with struggling believers striving to please the Lord. Even though some biblical passages express truths in negative terms, preachers can rephrase them positively. For example, preachers can positively apply the phrase, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14), by exhorting listeners to “build a strong marriage” (Edwards, 2005a, p. 375). Instead of, “There are several ways in which we disobey this command,” preachers would say, “There are several ways in which we can obey this command” (Sunukjian, 2007, p. 252). Whatever preachers choose to say in the conclusion, they should say it in a way that helps faith not hurt it.

Is brief. Not only should preachers end with hope, but also they should end quickly. Chapell (2005a) suggested concluding in two to three sentences, and Buttrick (1987) recommended five to eight sentences. With a 25-minute talk, Davis (1958) advised preachers to avoid dedicating more than 2 minutes to the conclusion. Broadus (Broadus, 1897/2005) suggested that the conclusion—like the introduction—be proportional to the content and the sermon’s objective. As one can see, fewer theorists are specific about the length of the conclusion than they are about the introduction. Though

they vary in opinion to the exact length, they concur that a sermon should end swiftly, strongly, and in a meaningful way (Broadus, 1897/2005; Buttrick, 1987; Chapell, 2005a; Low, 2006; Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922; P. Wilson, 1995b).

Positions strongest sentence last. The most meaningful sentence should be the last. Whatever the style and content of the sermon's final sentence, the sermon as a whole must lead up to it, and this last sentence must stand out boldly and forcefully, more than any other sentence (excluding the biblical text). It should not only be comprehensive, it should also seem impressive enough to make a significant impression on listeners (Broadus, 1897/2005; Chapell, 2005a). Chapel (2005a) recommended it contain the entire sermon in "nugget form" and its wording echo in the minds of listeners the rest of the week (p. 247).

Ends with a high level of personal, candid, intimate language. Another distinctive feature in the conclusion is the preacher's careful use of poems, quotations, and questions. Chapell (2005a) observed that the "stereotypical three-points-and-a-poem sermon holds little promise for persuasive power in this age of low literary appreciation. The modern mental palate has little appreciation for difficult words, remote references, and high blown speech" (p. 248). Adams (1986) and Buttrick (1987) suggested avoiding quotes altogether in the conclusion because they add a foreign expression at a crucial point in the sermon where the preacher's voice should be primary. Buttrick stated that conclusions are usually of a personal nature, where preachers speak to their congregations with open candor. It is a moment where preachers exhibit a high level of eye contact and emotional intimacy. Therefore, suddenly introducing a quote or poem can

be unnerving to listeners because they have to break from the speaker's voice in order to adjust to another's.

Unless the quote or poem expresses exactly what the preacher wants to say, or says it better than he or she wants to say it, preachers should use their own words. If preachers do choose a poem or quotation, both Robinson (2001) and Chapell (2005a) suggested it be short and memorized. The last moment of the sermon is never the time to lose eye contact to quote from an outline or manuscript. Thus, conclusions—at least for the most part—should be committed to memory and given with feeling.

Overall, theorists maintain that the ideal sermon should possess an introduction, one that adequately arrests attention and will focus listeners on the subject; it possesses transitions, those that connect related ideas and concepts into a cohesive unit; and it possesses a conclusion, one that looks back at the whole but propels listeners to bear the truth forward.

Style

Some theorists use the term *style* to refer to a preacher's personality and disposition, while others refer to style as the characteristic manner in which preachers express their thoughts into words (Chapell, 2005a; Davis, 1958; L. Hogan & Reid, 1999; Larson, 2005e; Robinson & Larson, 2005). Thus, style seems to comprise both the preacher's personality and his or her preference of words.

As preachers polish their style, they improve how they express themselves, their ideas, and their admonition. They communicate and clarify to their congregations

religious and moral truths, convey attitudes and feelings, and infuse ideas with energy, passion, and elegance. And as preachers express themselves with style, they give listeners more capacity to assimilate, remember, and understand religious and moral truths (Stanley & Jones, 2006). Many preaching theorists recognize the virtues of style and identify qualities inherent in good style (Chapell, 2005a; Craddock, 2001; L. Hogan & Reid, 1999; Mitchell & Simmons, 1996; Sunukjian, 2007; P. Wilson, 1995b). Some of the most distinctive features of style that dominate homiletic literature are discussed below.

Distinguishing Features of Style

Naturalness. Theorists see style—the characteristic manner in which preachers express their thoughts into words—as something with a natural quality to it. The style is natural in the sense that what preachers say and how they say it is unforced, unrehearsed and genuine (Brooks, 1989; L. Hogan & Reid, 1999; Robinson, 2001). Their words and ideas flow freely, uninhibited by self-serving worries (Broadus, 1897/2005). Preachers with a natural style avoid worry because they avoid what Brooks (1989) and C. Miller (2006) consider an occupational hazard in preaching: trying to be someone else or become someone else. Rather than imitating others, they develop a natural style that is organic, one that grows out of the preacher’s personality and disposition.

Openness. A natural style, however, is not merely being one’s self behind the pulpit. It is also the preacher’s willingness to disclose his or her feelings. Listeners can identify and connect with the human side of their preachers as they make themselves transparent enough to show that they, like their listeners, also possess worries,

weaknesses, wants, and needs (Elder, 1993). Chapell (2005a) warned, however, that self-disclosure does not give preachers license to become the center of attention, confess sins, or plead for sympathy. They do, however, need to confess their humanness—their defeats as well as their triumphs, their doubts as well as their faith. In doing so they become something real and tangible—those to whom listeners can identify. However, self-disclosure is only part of the composition of a style that is natural.

Besides disclosing feelings, preachers must also approach parishioners in a cordial, informal manner that does not sound like an essay delivered “To whom it may concern” (Robinson, 2001, p. 192). Rather than sounding like a thesis, a sermon should sound like a lively, casual conversation where preachers speak to and with their hearers in a natural, plain speaking, friendly way (O'Day, 2005). Chapell (2005a) said Charles Sturgeon “addressed two thousand people as though he were speaking personally to one” (p. 326). As preachers speak in a casual, direct, open manner, their style will have an instinctive and natural quality that listeners generally perceive as warm and sincere. A natural and genuine style is an essential element of style, but so is the ability to communicate in expressive ways.

Image-laden words. Preachers also shape, mold, and personalize self-expression through grammatical and rhetorical means. Preachers can use these means to speak out into language that sketches images into listener's minds—images that express human experience (L. Hogan & Reid, 1999). Thus, style is not merely “the glitter and polish of the warrior's word, but is also its keen edge” (Broadus, 1897/2005, p. 342).

Preachers produce these mental pictures by using carefully selected words and

phrases. They are to the preacher what the palette is to the artist. Vivid words and phrases turn learner's ears into eyes (P. Wilson, 1995b). Hence, preachers employ mimetic words that paint evocative imagery into listener's minds (C. Miller, 2006; Wiersbe, 1994).

Evocative imagery helps congregations see and hear what the preacher has seen and heard (Craddock, 2001). Word painting is important in preaching.

Embellished language is more suitable for the expression of deep feeling, or the symbolic projection of those things which surpass understanding. They do not negate reason; they simply go beyond the places we are capable of venturing to with logic. (Mitchell, 1990, p. 80)

McDill (1994) observed that redolent imagery speaks to the listener imagination because it helps them visualize concepts and ideas, which in turn helps them retain what they learn and feel. McDill went on to say that people speak with words, but they store memories in pictures. Their minds are not like dictionaries and lexicons filled with definitions, rather, they are like galleries in which hang memories, concepts, and ideas stored in the form of images and pictures.

This is not to say that preachers should do away with abstract language. P. Wilson (1995b) said that abstract language shapes understanding, and preachers need not reject it. Nevertheless, if preachers pump too much abstraction into their messages, they present reality as sterile and lifeless. As they balance abstraction with concrete imagery, they can imbue listener minds with tangible, mental pictures that embody intangible, obscure ideas.

When theorists suggest using vivid imagery, they are proposing that preachers use specific rather than general words (Arthurs, 2007, p. 46; Buttrick, 1987, p. 279; Davis, 1958, p. 272; Kemper & Alwyn, 1985, p. 97; Robinson, 2001, p. 194). Specific words

elicit images in listener's minds better than general words. For instance, compare Jesus' specific statement, "Consider the *lilies* of the field" to the general statement, "Consider the *flowers* of the field" (Matthew 6:28). Because the species, "lily," is more specific than the genus, "flower," the former word summons concrete images into listeners minds (Broadus, 1897/2005). Her "faded Levis and pink, worn flip-flops" appeals to the imagination better than "her pants and shoes." "Love is selfless," is not nearly as descriptive as, "Love is a father painting his four-year old daughter's fingernails when he would rather watch the football game." Although the phrase, "He criticized them severely" is good, "he blistered them with words" is better (Davis, 1958, p. 272). Specific words and phrases like these sketch pictures that the mind can see, sounds it can hear, textures it can feel, aroma it can smell, and flavors it can taste (Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922).

General words and phrases have their place, but as McDill (1994) pointed out, listeners cannot live on a steady diet of generals. They crave down-to-earth details because even though general words help them *interpret* reality detailed words help them *experience* it.

Theorists note that adjectives and adverbs also help sketch images in listeners minds, but they should be used sparingly since they do not help listeners experience reality as well as strong nouns and verbs (Buttrick, 1987; Davis, 1958; Robinson, 2001; Stott, 1982). Adjectives and adverbs color ideas but strong nouns and verbs convey them. Besides, adjectives and adverbs have a tendency to clutter language rather than clarify it (Buttrick, 1987; Robinson, 2001). Rather than telling listeners an experience was

“terrible,” Stott (1982) suggested preachers describe the experience in a way that terrifies listeners. Strong nouns and verbs usually carry a preacher’s meaning more vividly than weak adjectives and adverbs. To say, “His mood froze his face in furrows of grudge” is much more descriptive than “His face was hard and cold” (C. Miller, 2006, p. 198).

When preachers color images into listener’s minds with strong nouns and verbs, listeners experience a slice of life and live generalities rather than merely comprehend them. To paint images in the minds of listeners, preachers often rely upon a rhetorical device called *figurative language*.

Figurative language. A *figure* is a word, phrase, or sentence that legitimately departs from the fixed laws of grammar or syntax for a specific purpose (Bullinger & William, 1968). Although immoderate or strained use of figurative language robs style of grace, the absence of figurative language saps the life out of oral speech (Corbett & Connors, 1999). Figurative language helps a preacher add force and emphasis to his or her ideas while at the same time adding depth to those ideas (Bullinger & William, 1968). Though there are over 200 figures of speech, only two emerge repeatedly in homiletic literature. *Metaphor* serves as a means to help listeners see mental pictures and *parallelism* serves to help them remember them.

Metaphor. Theorists see metaphor functioning as more than mere embellishment (Buttrick, 1987; L. Hogan & Reid, 1999; Robinson, 2001; P. Wilson, 1995b). Hogan and Reid referred to the now-classic *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) as persuasive evidence that the human thought process is largely metaphorical. People not only use metaphors to structure meaning with phrases like “time is money” (Lakoff &

Johnson, 2003, p. 8) or “our marriage is on the rocks” (p. 45), but metaphors also shape their perception.

Both Arthurs (2007) and Bullinger and William (1968) argued that metaphor produces a deeper experience than simile. A *simile* mildly states that one thing is *like* another, but a *metaphor* boldly declares that one thing *is* the other. To say, “The Lord is *like* my shepherd,” is not nearly as strong as, “The Lord *is* my shepherd” (Psalms 23:1). If God is only like a shepherd, then in some respects, he is not a shepherd—an idea that could weaken Christian faith—a faith based on the perception that God is perfect. Listeners do not want to follow a God that is *like* a shepherd that may protect them. They want a God that *is* a shepherd that *will* protect them. They want one that *will* comfort, feed, hold, and carry them to safety.

“The Lord is my Shepherd” is a metaphor that arrests listener attention by revealing how two apparently unrelated objects are surprisingly related (Bullinger & William, 1968). It not only expresses their relationship in a unique way, but it helps listeners identify with God by comparing him to the stereotypic gentle, peace-loving shepherd. Rather than conceiving him as an abstract, passive, and impersonal God, this metaphor helps listeners perceive him as a more approachable, friendly, and caring God. This is one of the great strengths of metaphor. Because religious language is a form of experiential language, metaphor enriches the language by injecting vital images into it—language that bristles with meaning (Lee, 1973). Rather than diminish faith, P. Wilson (1995b) related, metaphorical language can strengthen it—especially as it particularizes abstract concepts like faith, hope, and charity. It helps listeners connect the dots between

transcendent concepts and concrete images.

Parallelism. In addition to using metaphor, many homiletic theorists recommend employing a rhetorical figure called *parallelism* (Bullinger & William, 1968; Chapell, 2005a; Larson, 2005e; Robinson, 2001; P. Wilson, 1999). Parallelism is a term that refers to a sentence in which the first half is grammatically symmetrical to the second half. For example, “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind” (Corbett & Connors, 1999, p. 383). Though parallelism does not necessarily invoke imagery into listener minds, Larson (2005e) commended employing parallel phrases because they are memorable, they highlight significant concepts, and they build suspense, energy, and drama. Moreover, parallel phrases diffuse a phrase with unity and form (Chapell, 2005a).

Parallel phrases also underscore significant ideas. Consider one preacher’s trenchant phrase about the self-righteous Pharisee’s prayer that emphasized the good in himself and the bad in his neighbor: “In the presence of God, he had a good eye on himself, a bad eye on his neighbor, and no eye on God” (Larson, 2005e, p. 396). This neatly turned phrase has the capacity to eclipse surrounding thoughts and ideas. It is memorable, and more important; it gives emphasis to a singular idea that sticks in the minds of listeners.

Parallelism also accentuates essential ideas by building tension and anticipation in listeners (Larson, 2005e; P. Wilson, 1999). Consider how Winston Churchill used parallelism in his speech as he rallied his nation against Hitler’s tyranny.

We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, for him who we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields

and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender. (Austin, 2004, p. 183)

As anticipation builds with each succeeding clause, Churchill created a climactic experience in listeners. By repeating a grammatical structure, his words build tension in listener's minds as he stirs their passion to fight and strengthens their will to win. Like soldiers marching to battle, every repetition is another step closer as his talk culminates into a forceful, emotional assault on the enemy he wants listeners to defeat.

Simplicity and brevity. Along with figurative language, theorists also suggest that preachers polish their style by using simple words (Blackwood, 1948; Broadus, 1897/2005; Chapell, 2005a; Davis, 1958; Kemper & Alwyn, 1985; Robinson, 2001; Stott, 1982; Sunukjian, 2007). Kemper and Alwyn (1985) observed that it is an unfortunate tendency for beginning preachers to hide behind a barricade of official sounding words. Rather than embalm biblical concepts with academic discourse, Buttrick (1987) suggested speaking with ordinary language, the common shared vocabulary of the congregation. He stated that newly graduated preachers step behind the pulpit with a theological, 12,000-word vocabulary. An average congregant, however, possesses a theological, 7,500-word vocabulary. As preachers spew out words like pericope, synoptic, eschatology, apocalyptic, exegesis, Septuagint, and “any number of the German imports ending with ‘geist,’” they leave behind congregants in a wake of clutter and confusion (Buttrick, 1987, p. 188; Kemper & Alwyn, 1985)

Since simple words bring clarity, Chapell (2005a) told preachers to avoid Latin words (usually polysyllabic). Latin words are difficult for listeners to understand. Conversely, Anglo-Saxon words (usually monosyllabic) are familiar to listeners because

they use them in everyday conversation. And though they are sometimes spurned in academia, they are welcomed in congregations (Buttrick, 1987). Sunukjian (2005) reinforced the necessity for simple diction by telling the story about Franklin Roosevelt who received a draft from one of his speechwriters with the following line, “We are endeavoring to construct a more inclusive society.” Roosevelt promptly scratched out the line and replaced it with, “We’re going to make a country in which no one is left out” (p. 263). Roosevelt’s conversational simplistic diction has the capacity to reach average listeners sitting in the pews.

Academia’s only place at the pulpit is in rare cases when the listeners are themselves preaching professionals. Robinson (2001) recognized that preachers need their specialized vocabulary to communicate with professionals in their field of expertise, but to the average parishioner in the pew, academic language is jargon. Too often preachers use it to impress rather than to inform. Rather than have listeners worship preachers, Chapell (2005a) noted, it is better that listeners understand them.

Overall, like the other categories that comprise core theory, style is a fundamental aspect of the theoretically perfect sermon. It consists of how preachers express their thoughts in a natural, genuine manner. By employing concrete words, figurative language, and simple words, preachers turn listener ears into eyes.

Illustrations

Though some preachers consider illustrations an unavoidable evil, most preaching theorists see them as a quintessential element in the ideal sermon. Both C. Miller (2006)

and Chapell (2005a) pointed out that the illustration has been used with success for over 2000 years. Broadus (1897/2005) expressed a common view that illustrations are the “best means of explaining religious truth” (p. 228). Chapell (2005a) noted that people view illustrations as the part of the sermon they enjoy most. Before presenting the features of ideal illustrations, it is helpful to understand what preaching theorists mean when they refer to the term “illustrations,” and why they consider them paramount to the success of a sermon.

According to theorists, illustrations are concrete examples that elucidate general assertions about reality (Davis, 1958; McDill, 1994). They clarify an idea, concept, or principle (Broadus, 1897/2005), and take something known and compare or contrast it to something unknown (K. A. Miller, 2005c). Generally, theorists use the terms “story” and “illustration” synonymously (Craddock, 1985; Harvey, 2005; Larson, 2005a; Sunukjian, 2007). Though not all stories illustrate an idea and not all illustrations are stories, when preaching theorists refer to illustrations, generally they speak of stories. In addition, when they refer to stories, generally they refer to stories that illustrate. Moreover, whether the illustration comes in the form of a simple metaphorical expression or an elaborate story with a conflict, climax, and a resolution, the illustration does just what the word implies—it illustrates. It sheds light into the dimly lit corners of thought to illuminate and enlighten the mind (Larson, 2005d; Stott, 1982).

Why Illustrations are Important

In Robinson’s (2001) seminal writing, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, he viewed illustrations as an integral component in the

sermon because they have the capacity to do so much with so little: They reiterate, explicate, validate, and apply concepts by relating them to corporeal experiences. By panning across homiletic literature, patterns emerged that explain why illustrations are important: (a) they appeal to people, (b) they help learners experience biblical truths, (c) and they motivate listeners to act.

Illustrations appeal to people. Preaching theorists remark that listeners enjoy illustrations for the simple fact that everyone loves a story (Eslinger, 1986). As G. W. Jones (1962) observed, an illustration often elicits a sudden response in listeners as preachers began to tell them. Even little children, become wide-eyed and attentive as preachers tell a story (Stott, 1982). Not all illustrations need be stories, but those that have the elements of the story, a beginning, a conflict, a climax, and a resolution, are often the kinds of illustrations that arouse people to lean forward in anticipation (Rice, 1980). As Craddock (1985) indicated, stories appeal to listeners because stories not only speak to them but for them. Everyone has story, but not all can articulate it. When preachers express what listeners feel or think, they helps listeners get in touch with their own experiences (Exley, 2005).

Illustrations help listeners experience biblical truths. Although the literature points out that illustrations are indispensable because they arouse interest (Chapell, 2005a), improve memory (Broadus, 1897/2005; C. Miller, 2006), and provide variety and rest to the mind (Beecher, 1902), the bulk of the literature indicated that the primary pedagogical function of the illustration is to help learners experience biblical truths. Generalizations communicate the *essence* of a truth, McDill (1994) observed, but

illustrations convey the *experience* of that truth—the attitude, emotion, and behavior related to it. Thus, Craddock (2001) remarked that preachers must immerse listeners in the particulars of life to help them experience the reality of that truth; for preaching, is more than merely the transfer of information, it is the transfer of experience.

For example, a biblical illustration like David and Bathsheba helps listeners feel the consequences of lust (2 Samuel 11-24); an illustration from a scene in *Camelot* helps listeners experience that “might is better than right;” an illustration like *The Tortoise and the Hare* helps listeners sense that slow but steady wins the race (James & Townsend, 1982). In short, illustrations convert generals into particulars, abstract into concrete, ancient into modern, general into particular, unfamiliar into familiar, and vague into precise (Stott, 1982). Chapell (2005a) observed that this is exactly what listeners need because “the mind yearns for, and needs, the concrete in order to anchor the abstract” (p. 166).

Illustrations motivate listeners to live the truths presented. Preaching theorists also see the illustration as a way to motivate listeners to act upon the truths presented in the sermon. Illustrations make a sermon interesting enough for listeners to act upon the admonition or counsel suggested by the biblical text (Ford, 2006). Granted, sermons without generalizations lack any lasting help, yet C. Miller (2006) said that sermons without stories are not interesting enough for most listeners to hear. Therefore, while propositions tell listeners what they should do, stories motivate them to want to listen and live them. J. Wilson (1996) declared that biblical doctrines help save listeners, but the experiences of others, translated into stories, help listeners actually live those doctrines.

In short, theorists see illustrations as appealing, pedagogical, and motivational, but they also agree that not all illustrations are equal. Some have qualities that make them more appealing and effective at inspiring action and change in listeners.

Distinguishing Features of Illustrations

In addition to explaining why illustrations are important, preaching theorists also point out which features make illustrations ideal. Whether they come from the preacher's personal life, classical literature, pop culture, scripture, or any other source, preaching theorists consider the best kinds of illustrations as those that are: (a) relevant, (b) match the truth they illustrate, (c) appropriate, (d) specific, and (e), begin and end correctly.

Are relevant and isolate human features. Many of the preaching theorists prefer illustrations that not only clarify a subject but they also possess a sense of relevancy (Exley, 2005; Fabarez, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Larson, 2005d; McDill, 1994). And “every-day disciple” illustrations have more relevancy, observed Larson (2005d), than those drawn from nature, science, or history (p. 530). For example, if one were to teach college-age congregations about moral courage, Larson (2005c) believed that young adults would relate more to an illustration about a woman who stands up to a peer challenging her standards better than they could relate to a story about a group of Civil War soldiers, who outnumbered and out of ammunition, courageously charged their enemy. Listeners struggle identifying with the latter situation, Sunukjian (2007) related, because they do not own swords, they do not face cannons, and they have never fought in the Civil War. The last story illustrates courage, but the story of the young women illustrates courage in a way that is relevant to listeners.

Although Larson (2005d) and Sunukjian (2007) discouraged using illustrations from history, nature, or science, two other seminal writers encourage their use. Stott (1982) believed that one of the best forms of illustrations come from history and nature. Broadus (1897/2005) put forward that the best illustrations come from scripture. It would be difficult to argue against both of these genres considering that many of the illustrations of Jesus came from Jewish history, biblical history, and nature. Though these latter authors argue a strong case against the former theorists, Chapell (2005a) indicated that neither side of the camp is all right or all wrong. He contended that historical illustrations, fictional allusions, fables, allegories, and other kinds of illustrations have their place. However, if preachers use them, Chapell noted that they should imbue them with familiar emotions, modern dilemmas, and everyday situations to which listeners can relate.

If the historical event is used for illustration it should be presented as a slice of life with enough description of setting, drama, and persons that today's listener can find himself in that event. If you must refer to the Spanish Armada, take care to capture the event. Isolate its human features. Let the listeners see the canons flash, feel the storm, and fear the shoals. No parishioner wants to endure another fourth-grade lecture on the history of England and Spain, hoping it may mean something now, even though it never did before. (p. 181)

Thus, whether the illustration comes from history, pop culture, or one's own experience, it should touch upon universal situations, emotions, dilemmas, or paradoxes listeners face (Exley, 2005; Larson, 2005d).

Match the truth they illustrate. Just as homiletic theorists urge preachers to select relevant illustrations, they also suggest using illustrations where there is a clear analogy between the illustration and the idea it illustrates (Buttrick, 1987; Eslinger,

1986). Craddock (1985) said that the point of intersection must be clear; otherwise, as C. Miller (2006) pointed out, the illustration confuses learners. Complex illustrations have a tendency to do everything except what they were intended to do—illustrate (Craddock, 1985). Rather than clarify an idea, they muddy the message. Buttrick (1987) asserted that preachers do better without illustrations than they do using those that miss their mark. He noted that even a simple illustration will befuddle listeners if it does not create a clear connection to the idea it illustrates. Thus, if a sermon idea says, “We ought to forgive our enemies,” Buttrick said preachers should avoid an illustration about an unforgiving person. Rather, they should offer an illustration where someone forgives their enemy.

Are appropriate. According to homileticians, whether or not an illustration is relevant matters little if the illustration is inappropriate. Inappropriate illustrations undermine the preacher’s credibility, and how listeners perceive a preacher determines in large part whether they receive the speaker’s message (L. Hogan & Reid, 1999; K. A. Miller, 2005b; Robinson, 2001; Stott, 1982). For this reason, Hogan and Reid (1999) cautioned preachers to be attentive to the content of their illustrations because they will either help or hurt credibility. Illustrations containing violence, P. Wilson (1999) said, hurt preacher credibility. That does not mean that preachers can never refer to violence in the world, but preachers must not go beyond the simple fact of it. Chapell (2005a) went even further and admonished preachers to avoid anything related to birthing, blood, bedrooms, bathrooms, and gore. Beukema (2005) cautioned preachers to avoid stories that mock a person’s weight, ethnicity, political views, or physical limitations, and he counseled to avoid sexual innuendos or mentioning sacred things in jest, especially deity.

When confronting the appropriateness for fictional illustrations, theorists sanction them but with a few qualifications. Since the parables of Jesus are fictional stories, Craddock (1985) concluded it would naturally be appropriate for preachers to use fictional stories as well. However, the preachers should indicate that the illustration was a fabrication so that people do not engage it in the wrong way. Jesus often indicated with phrases like, “There was a certain man...” (Craddock, 1985, p. 494). With this introduction, his listeners knew immediately it was a parable. Larson (2005b) suggested that preachers start their fictional stories with, “Once upon a time...,” “The story is told of...” or “In a certain town, a man lived with his elderly mother. We’ll call him Bill...” (p. 495). Whichever way preachers choose to communicate, audiences like to know if a story is fictional. That way listeners know the story’s purpose is to illustrate not to manipulate.

Hogan and Reid (1999) pointed out that a fragile balance exists between a preacher’s convincing image as a church leader, and his or her use of personal illustrations. Some theorists argue against personal illustrations, but more often than not, they applaud them as long as preachers use them wisely. Buttrick (1987) claimed there is never a good enough reason to talk about one’s self from the pulpit but many more authors like Rice (1980) in his seminal piece, *The Preacher’s Story*, asserted that there is never a good enough reason *not* to talk about one’s self.

Rice (1980) argued a strong case for telling personal stories because not only do listeners desire them, but God uses them to tell his story. In addition, Rice said listeners hunger to know the person behind the pulpit. They hunger to know that their preacher

understands their adversities, difficulties, distress, and occasional despair. Hungering for open and honest disclosure from the pulpit, listeners want someone that makes mistakes, occasionally fails, experiences small victories, and cries when tears well up. In short, theorists believe that listeners desire someone human; and preachers that cannot give evidence of that humanity, forfeit any right for listeners to take them seriously.

Like Rice (1980), Mitchell (1990) also believed that personal stories—especially personal conversion stories—have the potential to make a great impact on listeners. He said a preacher’s personal conversion story has a greater effect on listeners than any other kind of stories because preachers often tell them with vivid detail, clarity, and feeling. Because the stories are personal and real audiences easily identify with them.

Though theorists endorse personal stories, they do so with a few caveats. Rice (1980) believed that preaching is inseparable from who the preacher is, yet preaching is not putting oneself in the limelight. P. Wilson (1999) said more than one personal story per sermon is often unwise because the sermon focuses on the preacher rather than the listener’s lives. Mitchell (1990) counseled preachers to use personal material sparingly, otherwise, they preach themselves rather than Christ. Ford (2006) cautioned preachers to avoid becoming wrapped up in the details of their own stories, so that they do not eclipse God’s story. To avoid self-focus, P. Wilson (1999) suggested that after preachers tell a personal story, they focus attention back to the congregation by following the story with something like “But we have all had similar experiences...” (p. 272).

Theorists not only warn preachers about how often they share personal illustrations, but they also admonish them about how they present themselves to their

audiences. If preachers always present themselves as heroes, Exley (2005) observed, congregations will find their preaching self-serving and their credibility suspect. Chapell (2005a) stated that if good results from a preachers actions, then they should give the credit to God.

Likewise, they jeopardize their credibility when they make an exhibition out of their weaknesses. Craddock (1985) said listeners have a right to see their preacher's human side, but preachers go too far, however, when they turn their sermons into confessionals and offer their experience as normative. C. Miller (2006) said preachers cross the line when their confessions begin to embarrass listeners. He noted that if honest disclosure brakes from propriety, it undermines the preacher's effectiveness. Exley (2005) said sermons should inspire hope not sympathy or doubt. When preachers divulge personal temptations, they sabotage their credibility and the listener's faith.

Are specific. Davis' (1958, p. 256) statement, "the more specific and the more concrete an illustration is, the more powerful it is," is a statement that embodies a general sentiment found among various homiletic writings (Chapell, 2005a; Craddock, 2001; Davis, 1958; Larson, 2005d; Sunukjian, 2007). "Specific" refers to the kinds of words preachers select to illustrate an idea. As discussed in the section on style, homileticians suggest using descriptive words that create "evocative imagery" in the listeners mind—imagery that allows listeners to see, hear, and feel what the preachers have experienced. Chapell (2005a) pointed out that Jesus did this when illustrating with the parable of the prodigal son. He used words that described in detail the story's characters, actions, perceptions, dialogue, and the changes between different scenes. Jesus often used

declarative language that spoke to the head, but also he used expressive language that spoke to the heart (Lee, 1985).

Theorists believe that specific, concrete language is especially important when characterizing major players in the preacher's stories (Craddock, 1985; McDill, 1994; C. Miller, 2006; K. Miller, 2005a; Robinson, 2001; P. Wilson, 1999). In literature, characterization is a strategy that authors use to reveal different aspects of characters in a story. Preachers establish characterization, C. Miller (2006) suggested, when they portray the story's characters in universal terms that everyone knows. For example, to say, "He was built like Barney Fife" is more descriptive than to say, "He was skinny." Using a descriptive literary or media symbol pushes an image into the minds of listeners. Miller also advocated characterizing individuals by likening them to the most evident traits of those the preacher describes. "Yoda was all eyes and ears," "Judas was as tight as the purse he kept," or "Job tore his soul with question marks" gives listeners a sensory edge that helps them see the individual described (p. 160). In this way, listeners become as intrigued by the story's characters as they are by their circumstances.

Both Mathewson (2005) and Larson (2005a) also commended using dialogue to characterize biblical characters. They did caution, however, that preachers must let exegesis serve as a check and balance to keep their imagination from going beyond the text and splicing ideas into dialogue not found in the biblical text.

Begin and end correctly. Just as preachers need to develop the story's characters so that learners can experience the impact of the story, preachers also need to begin their illustrations properly. They accomplish this by beginning at the point of the story's action

and tension rather than chronologically (Chapell, 2005a; Larson, 2005b; Lowry, 2001a; Ortberg, 2005; P. Wilson, 1999). When they begin chronologically, often they bog listeners deep into superfluous details before they get to the heart of the story. Each time a new episode begins, listeners expect something to happen that discloses the purpose in telling the story. They quickly become disappointed, impatient, and lose interest. However, if preachers begin with the action or tension of the story, then flashback to earlier events to establish the context, they maintain interest while the same time establishing the story's context.

Theorists maintain that preachers should also orientate listeners in time and space. For example, beginning with, "Long, long ago in a galaxy far, far away..." not only situates the Star Wars enthusiast in time and space, but Chapell (2005a) said it also pulls them into the experience (p. 183). It is important to start in the action to evoke interest, but at the same time, it is also important to orientate listeners briefly about where and when the story takes place.

Beginning illustrations right, K. Miller (2005a) observed, also means that preachers avoid tipping off the story's ending at the beginning. For example, K. Miller said that a story beginning with, "When I was in 2nd grade, I lit a match under my bed which ignited the mattress, and nearly burnt our house down," is a story that reveals too much of the punch line. Miller would have suggested starting the story with something more along the lines of, "It was 7 a.m. in the morning. I should've been leaving for grade school, but instead my fingers were clenching a burning match under my bed." Without giving the ending at the beginning, this story presents just enough information to induce

suspense. After preachers resolve the issue at hand, then they can present the universal truth the story illustrates: “My Mom never punished me for burning that old bed, for she said years later that I had punished myself enough. So often in life we’re punished by sins rather than for our sins...” The beginning of an illustration is not the only place, however, where preachers need pay special attention.

Just as preaching theorists suggest proper ways to begin illustrations, they also suggest ways to end them (Larson, 2005b; C. Miller, 2006; K. Miller, 2005a). Though they use different terms for a story’s end—the “climax,” (Larson, 2005b, p. 497), “denouement” (K. A. Miller, 2005a, p. 485), or “reversal” (Lowry, 2001a, p. 55)—most agree that a story’s elements are calculated to crescendo to a heightened ending which unveils the missing key that unlocks the whole. Theorists allege that the ending is a point in the story that reveals a change in the characters or the circumstance, resolves a complication, or provides a sense of closure (Larson, 2005b).

Buechner (1977) used *King Lear* as an instance where a story’s ending reveals a character’s change, “Foolish old Gloucester has his eyes put out but then suddenly, for the first time, sees the truth about himself and his sons. Mad old Lear loses his crown and his kingdom but at the last becomes for the first time truly a king” (p. 4). It is in a changed Gloucester and Lear where the heart of the truth lies. As the preacher unveils the truth as Shakespeare did in his ending, it becomes the illustration’s greatest point of impact. An effective ending not only uncovers a hidden truth, but it also brings closure to the problem presented in the story. Whether it is the Yankees in the bottom of the ninth or David fighting Goliath, listeners want to know how the story ends. It is not, Arthurs

(2007) declared, the suspense induced by the problem that brings enjoyment but the closure. As the plot moves from disequilibrium to resolution, listeners find the experience cathartic.

In short, illustrations have the capacity to clarify concepts, appeal to listeners, and facilitate understanding. The best illustrations motivate listeners if they are relevant, congruent with the idea they illuminate, appropriate, specific, and begin and end properly. However, even if illustrations have these qualities, and preachers do not deliver them in an effective and appealing manner, theorists believe there is little chance for effecting change in listeners, which is why theorists see this last category as indispensable.

Delivery

How preachers present their message, Robinson (2001) asserted, is often just as important as *what* they preach. Granted, nothing of importance outstrips the message of biblical content, but the message may never reach the congregation without skillful delivery. For this reason, delivering a sermon in a way that engages and sustains listener attention is a sermon element preachers should never take for granted (Chapell, 2005a). The preacher's *delivery* is the way in which he or she uses body language, eye contact, voice inflection, emotional appeal, and other elements to engage and persuade listeners.

A century ago, theorists suggested delivery strategies that restricted preachers to a cookie-cutter style of delivery—one that ignored individual differences (Willimon, 2008). Today, theorists like Chapell (2005a) and P. Wilson (1995b) advise preachers to

find a delivery style that fits their personality yet embodies the truth. Most theorists endorse delivery strategies that are not only universal enough to apply to most preachers, but effective enough to appeal to most listeners. Listeners want the truth delivered in an effective and attractive manner—one that is consistent with the personality of the preacher and the import of the message (P. Wilson, 1995b). The lion's share of delivery strategies in homiletics fall into five categories: gestures, movement, eye contact, voice, and emotional appeal.

Delivery Strategies

Gestures. Since the body was created to move, stated Robinson (2001), then speakers should move too. Congregations do not crowd the pews to see a statue. Statues are for museums. Robinson claimed congregations come to see preachers who are vigorous and animated. One way preachers add lively movement to a sermon is through gestures. Gestures vary anywhere from facial expressions, hand expressions, or a shrug of the shoulders. Gestures communicate feelings, evoke interest, illuminate ideas, and sustain interest (Harris, 2004; Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922).

Chapell (2005a) endorsed gestures simply because some research indicates people communicate more by gesture than by speaking. Communication experts estimate that 65% of social meaning and 93% of emotional meaning come from nonverbal communication (Arthurs, 2005c). For this reason, Chapell (1989) advised preachers to gesture during their sermons. They drain vital energy from the good news of the gospel if they stand inert during presentations. When they do gesture, however, they should gesture in an instinctive and natural way (Hamilton, 2007).

Adjusting the microphone repeatedly, gripping pulpit horns anxiously, jingling pocket change skittishly, and twisting wedding rings are not natural gestures, they are nervous reflexes and preachers need to avoid them (Chapell, 2005a; Robinson, 2001). If they feel uneasy behind their pulpits, listeners feel uneasy in their pews. If nervousness prevents apprentice preachers from gesturing comfortably, then they should rest their hands on the pulpit until they feel able (Chapell, 2005a; Willimon, 2008). If they preach in buildings without pulpits, holding scriptures in one hand and making gestures with the other works best.

Besides looking natural, preachers also should avoid inappropriate gestures like pounding the pulpit to make a point (Willimon, 2008). If they wish to emphasize a concept by pounding, then Robinson (2001) suggested they pound softly. Shaking a scolding finger toward an audience is another inappropriate gesture. If preachers need to point to congregants, then Robinson suggested keeping the hand open because it seems less threatening. Most importantly, preachers should remember that the situation, the listeners, the preacher, and the message should always dictate whether a gesture is suitable (De Champlain, 1998). Besides the appropriateness of the gesture, theorists also dictate how often to gesture.

Chapell (2005a) suggested that the amount of gestures be proportional to the amount of concepts in the message. Though communication theorists recommend two gestures per sentence to get one's hands moving, Chapell suggested gesturing concepts, not words. If preachers accentuate words and syllables rather than illuminate concepts, they run the risk of frustrating their listeners with excessive movement. In summary, as

preachers gesture naturally, comfortably, and as appropriately in public as they converse in private, they have the capacity to captivate listeners as they explicate ideas.

Body movement. If preachers stand behind a pulpit, gesticulation becomes a prominent source of communication with the body. However, sometimes the sermon setting lacks a pulpit. Then the movement and placement of the body becomes just as important as movement of the hands. Without a pulpit, C. Miller (2006) suggested preachers move deliberately before the listeners without wandering. Too often, without the pulpit “they become meandering messengers who pace back and forth like a caged lion” (p. 190). Pacing is a bad habit because it tends to irritate listeners (Low, 2006). It also makes preachers look nervous. A nervous preacher makes for an uncomfortable congregation.

Movement can also underscore an important point in a message. C. Miller (2006) reminded preachers that the area around the pulpit is to the church what the stage is to the theater: Just as actors accentuate meaningful lines and moments in a play as they walk toward an audience, preachers punctuate meaningful points as they walk toward a congregation. If they move from point A to point B and stop, this can function as a way to signal to listeners that the old idea has ended and a new idea begins.

Eye contact. To communicate with a congregation, both Robinson (2001) and Chapell (2005a) asserted that eye contact functions as the single most important element of delivery. It helps preachers keep a pulse on listener interest, communicates the preacher’s concern for listeners, and keeps the preacher from seeming distant (De Champlain, 1998; Hamilton, 2007; A. Taylor, Meyer, Rosegrant, & Samples, 1989;

Weniger, 1957). C. Miller (2006) and P. Wilson (1995b) reminded preachers that when they pay more attention to their notes than their listener's facial expressions, they miss vital feedback that would otherwise help them make essential course corrections in their sermons. Facial expressions, along with body language, offer valuable cues that help preachers modify, adjust, and improve the content and delivery of their sermons to tailor fit the needs of their congregations. Miller continued that when preachers make statements that suddenly evoke puzzled looks on listener faces, the listener's facial expressions should cue preachers that their most recent statement muddled understanding. If so, observant preachers can then clarify what they said or give additional explanation or illustration. Glazed looks, yawns, or glancing at the clock might indicate that preachers need to invigorate their message with a story, interesting fact, moving illustration, anecdote, or a song. If preachers fail to observe people's expressions, not only will they risk overlooking expressions that provide vital feedback, but they might also miss the sense of accomplishment and confidence that comes from looking into satisfied eyes of edified listeners (Bartow, 1980).

Besides acting as a way to monitor listener interest and understanding, Robinson (2001) says that eye contact also evokes listener interest because it communicates to them that their preachers want to connect with them personally. For this reason, homileticians caution preachers to ignore the idea in communication theory that counsels speakers to look over the heads of the audience rather into their eyes (Chapell, 2005a; C. Miller, 2006; Robinson, 2001). Homiletic theory councils preachers to move their eyes across the congregation and let them rest for a moment on different individuals. This sends the

message to those individuals, “I’m interested in you” (Robinson, 2001). As preachers lock eyes with listeners, listeners feel their preachers speak to them individually. Those moments become significant for some listeners who come to the Sunday morning sermon prayerfully seeking for guidance, comfort, or answer to prayers. Singling out individuals is a quiet yet meaningful way to validate the listener’s worth.

Some listeners consciously try to catch the gaze of preachers, especially if they admire and respect their preachers. If preachers deny congregants eye contact, argued Chapell (2005a), they deny the people their preachers. For these reasons, preachers should concentrate on communicating to a few listeners the messages they want the whole congregation to understand. This will help evoke listener attention because people care about the preacher that cares about them.

Eye contact also helps preachers avoid sending the wrong message. Chapell (2005a) said that listeners might perceive preachers that keep their eyes riveted to manuscripts as distant, timid, or unqualified to speak. Just as it is socially unacceptable to avoid eye contact during a conversation, so it is during a sermon. Periodically glancing at notes, reading an occasional quote or a carefully worded thought is excusable to listeners (C. Miller, 2006). However, when preachers read their entire talks, they miss an important connection to the audience. “Far better to stumble over a phrase, smile confidently, and correct it,” Chapell remarked, “then to speak perfectly while displaying the top of your head as you read the bulk of your sermon” (p. 319).

Besides, sermons that preachers read become more like essays than proclamations of God’s will (P. Wilson, 2005). “If there ever was an age for reading sermons” C. Miller

(2006) declared, “ours isn’t it” (195). However, he also concurred with other preaching theorists that in order for a sermon to acquire a certain literary quality, preachers should try to write it word for word, but it must not be read word for word (Lloyd-Jones, 1971; C. Miller, 2006; Robinson, 2001; P. Wilson, 2005). For as R. Jones (2002) observed, preaching involves a direct contact between the listeners and preachers. Eye contact does just that. Eye contact becomes interplay between the preacher’s and listener’s personalities, minds, and hearts, interplay that preachers get by looking into eyes, not notes. Therefore, as they look into eyes, they not only track listener interest and show they care, they also narrow the emotional distance between preacher and listener.

Voice. Like eye contact, *voice* functions as another important delivery component, especially when reading scriptural text (Chapell, 1989). Although communication theorists have created a bevy of voice rules and guidelines, Chapell (2005a) stated that the overriding principle is simply this: fill the room but speak to individuals. Preachers can accomplish this as they pay special attention to pitch, volume, pacing, and pause.

Pitch. According to Robinson (2001), *pitch* refers to how a preacher’s voice moves up and down the note scale through different registers and inflections. The preacher’s voice throughout a sermon is similar to the melody of a song: just as the melody is a sequence of pitches that create a tune, the preacher’s voice is a sequence of pitches that creates a sermon. Good pitch is the antithesis of a flat, monotone voice. A monotone voice—one mark of a lifeless sermon—jades listener’s ears in the same way a child does by incessantly pounding one piano key (Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922).

According to Chapell (2005a), preachers can avoid monotony when they vary volume, tone, and pace. Various types of monotone diminish delivery, but three prevail in preaching: the “low and slow; high and fast; and rhythmic” (p. 317).

Chapell (2005a) said the *low-and-slow* voice is one where the preacher speaks in a low pitch at a slow, wearisome pace. A *high-and-fast* voice speaks at a high pitch, tedious pace. With the latter, preachers incessantly spew forth words without pause. It seems counterintuitive that a high-and-fast voice qualifies as a monotone voice, especially since it possesses more intensity than the low-and-slow. However, when every word has an equal emphasis, an equal pace, and an equal tone, whether the pitch is high or low, it fatigues listener’s ears.

Furthermore, preachers should avoid the *rhythmic* voice too. Theorists consider the rhythmic voice as a monotone type because it repeats the same pitch, tone, and inflection with each new sentence or paragraph. Theorists label it as a monotone voice because the sentence begins with a low pitch, ends with a high pitch, and then the pattern repeats with each new sentence. Though the individual pattern has some variety, overall iterative process sounds the same and offends listening ears (Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922).

One way preachers avoid monotonous voice patterns is simply to say things as though they mean them (Broadus, 1897/2005; Chapell, 1989, 2005a; Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922; Robinson, 2001). Whether they speak of sorrow, joy, misery, or peace, they need to use a pitch that reflects the feeling they want to emphasize. As preachers modify their pitch to match meaning, they can better move listeners with their message (Chapell, 2005a).

Volume. Just as theorists exhort preachers to modify pitch to improve their delivery, they also suggest practicing good *volume* techniques. One reason homileticians have become interested in African American preaching in recent years, reasoned K. Miller (2005c), is because it takes in the full range of human volume, from a shout to a whisper. It has the potential to assist preachers by helping them create an emotive or “celebration” experience (Mitchell, 1990, p. 62; P. Wilson, 2004). Though theorists find interest in how African American preaching utilizes volume to create experience, mainstream homiletics sees volume more as a spice than a main ingredient (Chapell, 2005a; Davis, 1958; Robinson & Larson, 2005; Stott, 1982; P. Wilson, 1995b). Chapell advised preachers to regulate their volume according to their distance to the farthest listener. He admonished preachers to remember that to reach everyone does not require preachers to blast anyone, especially with today’s public address systems. If there must be “explosions” as he called them, preachers ought to use them sparingly (p. 317).

There was a time in homiletics when blaring volume was vogue, but that time is past. Evangelism in the 19th century, C. Miller (2006) noted, was crackling with urgency because of worries related to heaven and hell. Because of that tradition, some contemporary preachers equate an increase in volume with urgency. Heaven and hell are still real issues to Christian listeners, but “many wonder if the earsplitting noise level is really necessary in saying ‘God loves you’” (p. 183). C. Miller said that some preachers, unfortunately, see loud as important as the truths they teach. They perceive God as speaking from a booming voice rather than a moderate voice. A loud preacher quickly fatigues listener minds and wearies their affections. Thus, shouting is no longer requisite,

or even desirable. What is desirable is to change one's volume at different places in the sermon to bring emphasis (Robinson, 2001). When preachers vary their volume from either a louder tone or a whisper, they can draw attention to specific words, phrases, concepts, or feelings. This strategy helps them adjust their volume to match their message or punctuate a moment, so that in the end volume assists in delivering the sermon rather than dominating it.

Pacing. In addition to volume, *pacing* also helps preachers fine-tune their delivery (Chapell, 2005a; Robinson, 2001). Pacing refers to the rate at which preachers speak their words (Kemper & Alwyn, 1985). Preachers often use pacing to direct listener focus on critical concepts and meaningful moments within the sermon (Robinson, 2001). There are different ways preachers can pace their words to accomplish these objectives. For example, preachers can accelerate word rate to signal that they have arrived at a point of excitement, urgency, or passion in the message. If the rate continues to accelerate, and the volume begins to increase, suspense and anticipation build as the sermon crescendos closer to the crowning moment when it resolves (Lowry, 2001a). When the sermon reaches that emotional or intellectual crest, preachers can slow the pace to a skidding halt and a quiet hush. Then in a slow, steady, still, soft voice, preachers accentuate the point that matters most, the point they want listeners to never forget even if they forget everything else (Sunukjian, 2007).

C. Miller (2006) observed that sometimes preachers will accelerate the sermon's pace to a sprint without skidding to a halt to communicate that the information is part of the journey but not the destination. For example, they might rattle off facts, or summarize

a passage quickly to cue listeners that the facts are important to the degree that they provide a framework, context, or background to the part of the message that matters most.

Pausing. Like pacing, *pausing* serves as one more way to bring emphasis to crucial concepts and moments in the sermon (Blackwood, 1948). Robinson (2001) stated that a pause is to the ear what commas, semicolons, and periods are to the eye. They are the major punctuation marks of a sermon. Rather than merely “rest stops” along the sermon path, they are moments that give congregations an opportunity to ponder and feel something. As Blackwood (1948) keenly noted, “paradoxically, the most impressive parts of the sermon may come while the speaker remains silent, waiting for the spirit to impress on the hearer’s mind and heart an idea or a picture” (p. 210). When preachers feel deep emotion and pause long enough to regain their composure, sometimes those moments communicate feelings more effectively than words (Robinson, 2001). Because pauses have emotional impact, wise preachers use them with caution and prudence. They avoid exaggerating the pause too long lest they sound melodramatic or seem manipulative. Robinson (2001) maintained, “The pause should be long enough to call attention to the thought, but not so long that the silence calls attention to the pause” (p. 218). Used appropriately, it becomes an effective tool to spotlight the first word or phrase spoken after the pause. Sometimes it stands out above everything else preachers say.

Emotional appeal. *Pathos*, a term coined by Greek rhetoricians, refers to a delivery element employed by speakers to stir emotions, feelings, and passions in their audiences. Some preaching theorists like Arthurs (2005b) and Hogan and Reid (1999)

used the term *pathos*, but more commonly, theorists use the terms *passion* or *emotional appeal* (Chapell, 2005a; Davis, 1958; Lloyd-Jones, 1971; Robinson, 2001; P. Wilson, 1995b). Speaking with passion is essential, but Arthurs cautioned preachers never to use emotional appeal to stimulate an audience to act contrary to reason. Rather, tether passion alongside reason. Together, they work like a rudder and sail: reason *guides* the sermon and passion *powers* it. Thus, one can have passion at the pulpit without compromising reason or manipulating emotion.

P. Wilson (1995b) asserted that preachers do not necessarily need a strategy to evoke emotion in listeners as much as they need a strategy to exhibit authentic emotions in themselves. It is through authentic emotions that preachers have the capacity to evoke listener attention. Chapell (2005a) said,

Let earnestness be your eloquence. Preaching that is all polish and no fire shines reputations but does not melt hearts. Even if the words you say barely trip over the lip of the pulpit, if you speak with sincerity...others will listen.... Showing genuine enthusiasm for what you deeply believe is the only unbreakable rule of great delivery. (p. 323)

P. Wilson (1995b) agreed. He believed that passion is a byproduct of a preacher's deep, authentic faith and zeal for the message. When preachers express genuine feelings about a biblical idea or biblical person and do it in a sincere way, they inspire listeners.

Therefore, the sermon should persuade the preacher before the preacher tries to persuade the listener. Wilson believed preachers would be authentic as they choose a biblical text for which they feel passionate because they have applied them successfully in their own lives, or seen them successfully applied in the lives of others.

Conceptual Framework

The modified version of Broadus' (1897/2005) categories provided the conceptual framework for this study: (a) content, (b) arrangement, (c) introduction, transition, and conclusion, (d) style, (e) illustrations, and (f) the delivery. These categories represent core theory in homiletics because they surface repeatedly in the literature. The sum of the elements within each category creates a theoretical framework that comprises the ideal sermon (see Figure 5). Here is a brief summary of the elements that comprise the before mentioned categories.

Content

Theorists describe ideal content as that which is focused on scripture, uses generalizations, has application, centers on Christ, and is infused with hope. A

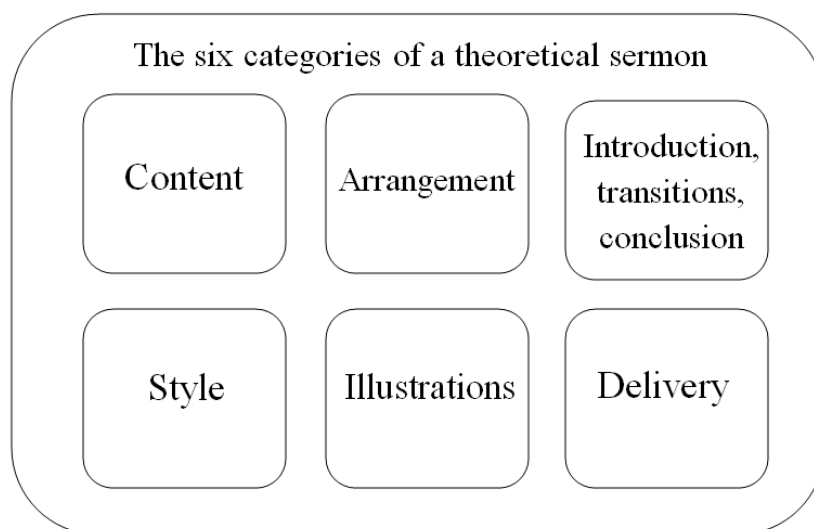


Figure 5. The modified version of Broadus' categories that create the conceptual framework.

scripturally centered sermon is one that is conceptually rooted in the text (Lloyd-Jones, 1971). The conceptual meaning of the text helps preachers create generalizations.

Generalizations are specific enough to describe the ancient world, yet universal enough to help the modern world (Davis, 1958). The ideal sermon possesses a sufficient amount of application which simply answers, “So what?” and “Now what?” (Chapell, 2005a; Low, 2006; Veerman, 2005, p. 285). The content should also center on some aspect of Christ (Greidanus, 1999). Whether preachers highlight biblical people or modern-day people as exemplary, they should not only point to those people’s character but to the *source* of their character—Christ (P. Wilson, 1995b).

Arrangement

Besides content, arrangement is also important. Whether preachers choose to shape their sermons into deductive rational arguments, or inductive narrative plots, the best arrangements possess both inductive/deductive forms, a central idea, movement, text-centeredness, and purpose. The sermon arrangement should merge both inductive/deductive forms (Chapell, 2005a). That arrangement should include a central idea which unifies the sermon (Davis, 1958). Arrangement should also facilitate movement of thought (Craddock, 2001). Moreover, a sermon arrangement should also be either topical or textual (Allen, 1992). And last, the sermon should possess a unifying purpose (Chapell, 1993; L. Hogan & Reid, 1999; Lowry, 2001b).

Introduction, Transition, and Conclusion

Like the arrangement, introductions, transitions, and conclusions also help create

an ideal sermon. Ideal introductions are brief, pique interest, are separate from ad lib remarks, and are free of apologies and excuses (Davis, 1958; C. Miller, 2006; Robinson, 2001; Stott, 1982) .

Similar to introductions, transitions are also essential and should link all the ideas in the sermon together into a whole. They turn thought backward to what was said, and forward to what will be said (Chapell, 2005a).

Finally, just as transitions are essential to the sermon as a whole, so are conclusions. Ideal conclusions take listeners full circle from beginning to end, highlight main points, tell listeners what to do, end quickly, end hopeful, are brief, place the most meaningful sentence last, and end with personal intimate language (Chapell, 2005a; Craddock, 2005; Davis, 1958; Robinson, 2001; Stanley & Jones, 2006).

Style

Style refers to the preachers' personality and the characteristic manner in which they express their thoughts into words (Chapell, 2005a; Davis, 1958; L. Hogan & Reid, 1999; Larson, 2005e; Robinson & Larson, 2005). Ideal style has naturalness, openness, image-laden words, figurative language, and simple words (Elder, 1993; L. Hogan & Reid, 1999; Sunukjian, 2007; P. Wilson, 1995a). Naturalness is an ideal that refers to the way in which preachers sound genuine. Ideal openness is one where preachers appropriately disclose feelings, worries, wants, needs, defeats and doubts without confessing sins or demeaning their credibility or character (O'Day, 2005).

A preaching style that is ideal is one where preachers also use image-laden words. These words paint images into listener minds, images that help them visualize what

preachers see (L. Hogan & Reid, 1999). Preachers with an appealing style also employ figures of speech—especially metaphor and parallelism. Metaphors create new meaning and parallel phrases stick in the memory while at the same time highlight significant concepts (Buttrick, 1987). And the last trademark of ideal style is characterized by the way preachers speak in simple, ordinary, everyday language (Sunukjian, 2007).

Illustrations

In addition to style, illustrations are also important in preaching because they are the part of the sermon people enjoy the most. Ideal illustrations focus on human experience, clarify the point they make, are appropriate, concrete, and begin and end properly (Eslinger, 1986; Exley, 2005; Lowry, 2001b; C. Miller, 2006; K. Miller, 2005b). Focusing on human experience refers to focusing on the familiar emotions, modern dilemmas, and everyday situations inherent in many stories.

Besides focusing on the human experience, illustrations should also elucidate the point they seek to make (Craddock, 1985). And illustrations should be appropriate in the sense that they are free of violence, repulsiveness, self-aggrandizement, and confessions of sins (Robinson, 2001). Concrete illustrations use descriptive and expressive words and along with those words, preachers use characterization strategies as well as dialogue between the story's characters (McDill, 1994; C. Miller, 2006). Last, illustrations should begin and end properly. That is, they should begin in the action of the story while at the same time orientating listeners in time and space; and they should end in such a way that they do not reveal the dénouement too early (Robinson, 2001).

Delivery

Illustrations are important, but even the best stories can sound dull and lifeless if a preacher's delivery is flat. Delivery refers to the way preachers use gestures, movement on stage, eye contact, voice inflection, emotional appeal, and other elements to engage and persuade listeners. As preachers gesture concepts, not words, they revitalize their sermons and sustain interest (Chapell, 2005a). When they move deliberately without wandering or pacing they add emphasis by where they move and how they move (Low, 2006). As they look into the eyes of listeners searching for feedback and inspiration, they not only meet listener expectations, but also communicate genuine interest. When preachers use their voices to say what they mean and mean what they say, listeners tend to respond with more affection and enthusiasm (Robinson, 2001). And last, they should yoke reason alongside passion (L. Hogan & Reid, 1999).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Although the nature of qualitative research required me to be flexible, open minded and attentive to conceptual twists and bends in the research, it also required me to create an orderly and logical plan. The balance of this chapter provides details related to the methodology of this present research. It includes not only a justification for the research method of choice, but also the purposes and objectives, the researcher's role, selection of the case, ethical issues, limitations, description of the context, data analysis procedures, and the means of establishing credibility.

Justification of the Case Study

I chose the case study method for this research because it was the best tool to analyze the particularity and complexity of phenomena within this single case (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Stake, 1995). Case study was also chosen as a tradition of inquiry because it "holds a long, distinguished history across many disciplines" (Creswell, 1998, p. 62). While it is true that the case study method can focus on a variety of entities such as an event, activity, program, or an individual, this case study focuses on the latter (Creswell, 1998). That is, it focuses upon a specific individual, a preacher, one from which I could learn the most about phenomena related to ideal preaching (Merriam, 2002). Like all case studies, this research collected data from multiple sources (e.g., observations, interviews,

artifacts, documents), then analyzed those data searching for patterns, meaning, and understanding.

Objectives and Overview

Again, this research compared the practice of an expert practitioner preacher to theoretical strategies from homiletic theory. It searched for variations between theoretical strategies in homiletics and a certain preacher's practice. If the preacher did practice homiletic theory, and he or she appealed to listeners, then his or her practice would help confirm that preachers do practice homiletic theory and practicing that theory appeals to listeners. If the preacher, however, employed strategies incongruent with theory, then his or her practice could inform theory with novel preaching.

To accomplish the objective of this research and discover whether the preacher's practice was congruent with theory, I took the characteristics of the ideal sermon described in the literature review, and created a rubric as a standard to compare the preacher. The reader can see a small portion of the rubric in Figure 6 or the entire rubric in Appendix A.

The preacher's practice was compared to this theoretical rubric to discover if his practice overlapped theory. Using all six categories of the ideal sermon, 16 audio sermons were analyzed except in the case where an additional five video recordings were used for direct observation of body gestures and eye contact. The results of the side-by-side comparison are listed in Chapter V.

To ensure that I exhausted every possibility of finding something the preacher did

Preaching theory	The preacher's practice
Sermon begins with listeners rather than scripture text	
It presents a universal, felt need that feels personal.	
Introduces the central idea.	
Creates a need in the listeners to want to hear the message.	
Does not open with apologies or excuses.	
The thing that introduces the subject is closely related to the subject.	
Before introducing the background of the text and the text, preachers should begin with elements in Table 1.	

Figure 6. A sample of the rubric.

that was unlike theory, I also went beyond the 16 audio and five video-recorded sermons and analyzed his published writings, other sermons, books, and articles.

The Researcher's Role

Within this research, I functioned as the primary data collection instrument, since I possessed certain characteristics and qualities that enabled me to discern special qualities in data that others might miss. Strauss and Corbin (1990) called this *theoretical sensitivity*, and explained how it refers to the attributes possessed by researchers that enable them to bring insight and meaning to data (p. 41). “The researcher does not go blank or give up his knowledge. He goes sensitive with his learning which makes him alert to [the] possibility of emergence and how to formulate it conceptually” observed Glaser (1998, p. 123). One can glean theoretical sensitivity from a variety of sources.

Literature acts as one source. If the researcher is astute in the area related to the research, the researcher's background sensitizes him or her to the phenomena of study. I come equipped for this research because I have perused through hundreds of books and articles related to homiletic theory—a theory which specifically targets preaching strategies, techniques, and methods.

Strauss and Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) also emphasized that professional and personal experience heightens one's theoretical sensitivity. In addition to religious education experience, I have also traveled extensively as a professional preacher (or “speaker” as they call them in the LDS Church). I have spoken for 17 years at the same symposiums and educational conferences as the participant of this research so I am familiar with needful strategies for effective preaching in these settings.

Selection of the Case

As one might suspect with case study, the purposeful selection of the participant became a vital decision point (Creswell, 1998). It was essential because the case study required a participant rich in information—information related to expert preaching (Merriam, 2002). It required a preacher who was an “extreme case” manifesting unusual expertise as a preacher. Expertise was measured by the participant's broad appeal among listeners. The case study also required one who published and was accessible (Creswell, 1998, p. 119). Lewis (a pseudonym) was chosen because he exhibited these previous characteristics. Selecting someone with expertise as a preacher was needful because in theory his preaching would emulate characteristics of homiletic theory.

It was also needful that Lewis had published because publishing provided access to his sermons. Lewis also had to be accessible for personal interviews. Last, Lewis had to possess broad appeal among listeners since theoretically preachers with broad appeal demonstrate those characteristics suggested by ideal theory.

It was concluded that he had broad appeal because he published and there was a relatively higher attendance at noncompulsory events where he spoke. For example, at one educational conference called “Education Week” on Brigham Young University campus, there was an average attendance of 271 listeners per class. However, in Lewis’ classes there was an average of 1,103 attendees. Out of 200 or more speakers at Education Week, Lewis ranked among the top five presenters according to class counts and comparison to other presenters from the year 2005-2009. Since researchers have established that adult learners “vote with their feet” (Lawson, 1975, p. 19), this establishes credibility that there was wide appeal among listeners for Lewis’ preaching.

One could also argue that Lewis had broad appeal since he was recorded at S&I symposiums, and only a limited number of presenters were chosen each year by administrators for recording purposes. There were various reasons why certain speakers were chosen, but among them, the presentation had to have a certain quality, appeal among listeners, and had to benefit listeners in some way.

Though Lewis preached sermons like preachers in other Christian faiths, there were some differences between him and other preachers outside the LDS church. For one, he was not professionally trained to become a preacher. There is no formal training in the LDS church to become a preacher or “speaker” as they call them. Lay members

are, however, given many opportunities to speak as part of worship services. In addition, he was not paid to speak to his or any other congregation gathered at a Sunday service. Those who speak at church services have an ecclesiastical position but they are not paid to do so. All his sermons used in this research were given in the context of a religious conference, symposium, or inservice where he functioned as a religious, motivational-type speaker rather than church services.

Lewis' daily occupation consisted of teaching the scriptures to college students at an LDS institute adjacent to a state college in the western United States. The class schedules at the institute were synchronized with the college so that students would come and go with each hour. Lewis taught a certain number of classes each day and worked an eight hour day at the institute.

When he preached the sermons used in this research, these sermons were delivered at events outside his regular job. The sermons were either given during the summer when he was available to speak at symposiums, educational conferences, or during the evening after his 8-hour day.

I heard Lewis speak for the first time at an S&I symposium in 1992. Since that time, I have heard him speak over the years in different venues. As an S&I employee myself, I attended similar symposiums and inservice meetings as he did. In the fourth year of my Ph.D., I approached him for the first time to discuss studying his preaching for my dissertation research.

Ethical Issues

To ensure that the research remained ethical, Lewis was informed about the purpose of the study. Because most of the research was spent sifting through his published material, rather than interviewing him, the data collection procedures were substantially unobtrusive (Weber, 1990). There were, however, ecological ethical issues inherent in this case (Gall et al., 2003).

Because his work culture discouraged impartiality, there was a potential for some of his colleagues becoming disenchanted with the idea that one preacher was considered exceptional above another. At the LDS institute where he taught, there were other men and women teachers who interacted with Lewis. If one of Lewis' colleagues discovered he was chosen as a participant because he was considered an "expert" preacher, even though his preaching was done outside the LDS institute of religion, the colleague might have felt some resentment that he or she was not chosen instead of Lewis for the research. To counter all the aforementioned ethical concerns, as the researcher, I kept the participant's name anonymous.

Limitations

Like most case studies, one can find inherent limitations to this particular research. One limitation concerned personal bias (T. Smith, 1999). I have observed Lewis preach for 20 years and have admired his preaching. The reason, logic, insight, inspiration, and the rhetoric of his messages reminded me of C.S. Lewis which is someone I have always appreciated also (This is why the preacher received "Lewis" as a

pseudonym). Because of this partiality, some of my inferences were subject to my personal bias.

Moreover, there was a second limitation related to my personal bias—especially because I was the instrument that observed, collected, coded, analyzed, and interpreted data. Thus, the findings became subject to my preconceptions and etched with my signature. That said, however, I sought to counterbalance the bias by the use of what Eisner (1991) called *structural corroboration*. For a study to become structurally corroborated, the researcher collects bits and pieces of evidence that substantiate the conclusions. This present study collected evidence from various sources discussed later.

The third limitation related to my personal bias was my own view of what comprises good preaching. My view has some potential to make my research of Lewis biased since the features of his preaching parallel my own perception of good preaching. I have always felt strongly that sermons should be filled with practical insights that help me progress spiritually, socially, and emotionally. I have also felt that a sermon should begin strong and end strong. It should arrest attention and hold attention. I have appreciated speakers that use figurative language with finesse. As mentioned in the literature review, vivid language has the capacity to paint eloquent pictures in the mind. I have also felt that illustrations are essential to good preaching. Without them, a sermon seems dry and listless. Too many illustrations, however, take listeners out of the scriptures and put undue attention on the speaker. These personal opinions of good preaching had the potential to color my view of the participant's own preaching since his preaching emulates some of the same qualities of preaching I appreciate.

Besides personal bias, the last limitation to this research was generalizability (T. Smith, 2001). Because the research was limited to one person, who was not randomly chosen, one cannot generalize these research findings to all expert preachers. The in-depth rich descriptions of Lewis' homilies, however, present to the reader the actual practice of an expert preacher, and enable the reader the experience of "being there" at Lewis' sermon and interviews (Creswell, 1998, p. 21). In that way, the reader can assess for him or herself, whether Lewis' preaching emulates core theories.

Description of the Context

Creswell (1998) noted that a case study is a system which is bounded in time and place. In relation to time, the entire scope of this single-case study from beginning to end covered a space of almost 3 years (July 2007-March 2010). In regards to place, the audio and video-recorded sermons analyzed in this research as well as the interviews with Lewis, took place in various locations in the Salt Lake City and Utah Valley regions. The interviews took place in the comfort of Lewis' home, and an LDS church. Observations took place in an LDS institute chapel, and Brigham Young University (BYU) where he spoke. The sermons in the LDS institute chapel were given to professional religious educators, and the sermons given at BYU were offered in a 22,700-seat, multi-purpose arena and a large auditorium. The analysis process took place in personal places including my home, office, and family van.

Data Analysis Procedure and Data Source

This research employed a primary procedure for analysis and used a primary data source. It also employed a secondary procedure and a secondary data source. The primary procedure comprised both deductive and inductive research methods and relied on 16 audio-recorded and five video-recorded sermons as the primary source of data. All data results in Chapter IV came from this primary procedure and data source except for one section at the end of Chapter IV titled, “Analysis Using the Secondary Procedure and Secondary Source.”

Primary Procedure and Data Source

Deductive method. To discover if Lewis’ practice was congruent or incongruent with theory this primary procedure applied a deductive and an inductive method for analyzing 16 audio-recorded and 5 video-recorded sermons. Before analyzing Lewis deductively it was necessary to create a rubric, a standard from which to compare him. This rubric was built out of the literature review in Chapter II. That review represented ideal preaching. From the review, I broke ideal preaching into 6 categories, 39 subcategories, and 58 characteristics.

Once the categories, subcategories, and characteristics of ideal preaching were identified, I made two columns in Microsoft Word. The left column contained the subcategories and characteristics of ideal preaching (see Figure 6 shown earlier or in Appendix A). The right column was left blank. While analyzing 16 transcribed sermons, and the five video-recorded sermons, I placed a checkmark in the right column if there

was a presence of a specific characteristic of ideal preaching. I performed that analysis with each new category. The process was recursive because with each new category I had to go back to the sermons again.

The sermons were analyzed by listening, reading transcriptions, and outlining each sermon in detail. The five video recorded sermons were analyzed through observation and taking notes. To augment the analysis with the rubric, there were also frequency counts of certain words, phrases, illustrations, and a test was performed using Microsoft Word's Flesch Reading Ease score. Excel was used to assist in these frequency counts. This portion of the primary procedure of analysis represented a deductive approach because I went from general conclusions about ideal preaching taken from homiletic theory to the specific practice of the preacher.

Inductive method. As part of the primary analysis procedure, I employed an inductive method that moved me through a process of observing the specifics of the preacher's practice to stating general conclusions that explain relationships between the specifics of that practice. Said another way, I sought to find strategies employed by the preacher but unaccounted for in theory. This method required me to analyze the integral parts, patterns, and pedagogical structures of the 16 audio-recorded and five video-recorded sermons searching for characteristics that were different from the theory stated in the rubric. Often this inductive method was employed separately from the deductive method mentioned above but there were times when both methods were employed during the same session of analysis. This inductive approach goes from observing specific phenomena to making inferences about those phenomena.

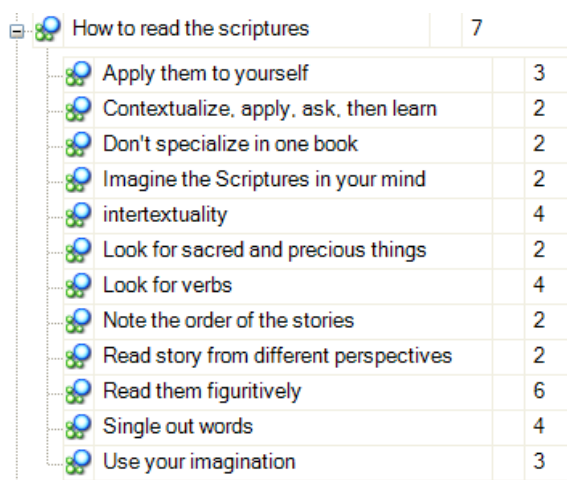
My research structured the data with coding. The coding referred to is an analytical method that Glaser and Strauss (1967) called *coding*. A code is an “abstract representation of an object or phenomenon” (Bazeley, 2007, p. 66). This analytic method consisted of three phases.

During the first or *open coding* phase of the analysis, the 16 sermon transcriptions were broken down, examined, and compared looking for specific classes of information that seemed related to good preaching. I searched for classes of information different from those categories espoused in homiletic theory. Once a phenomenon surfaced because it seemed appealing, or if it had a characteristic unlike those stated in homiletic theory, I tagged it with NVIVO software and placed it in a folder called a *free node*. A free node is a kind of folder designated for holding tagged text—text that does not assume relationships with any other concepts. For example, I began to notice that the participant would offer tips to listeners about reading their scriptures. Each time he suggested how one might improve their personal scripture study I tagged that paragraph in the transcription and dragged it to a *free node* that was just for scripture reading strategies. It was kept there until I was ready to name it and structure the coded data in a classification system.

In the second phase, I begin to sort through all the coded text in the before mentioned free node searching for features that were similar and different. As I found patterns among the coded phrases, I began to make mental notes how I might separate them. For example, three times Lewis told listeners to apply the scripture to themselves, two times he counseled them to imagine the scripture story, four times he told them to

look for verbs, and two times he suggested that they note the order of the scriptural stories. When I discovered a way to structure the data and separate it into these homogenous groups, I created what NVIVO calls a *tree node*. A tree node is a kind of folder that structures the coded data into hierarchies of categories and subcategories similar to the branches of a tree. Each branch is like a folder or rather a link to the coded text in the transcriptions. For example one branch was called “Apply them to yourself” and the tree node was titled “How to read the scriptures” (see Figure 7). Using the constant comparative approach, I looked for other examples where he taught listeners how to read scriptures then dragged that text onto the branch to which it was related.

In the third phase of the analysis, I compared the branches to each other within each tree node (see Figure 7) looking for patterns or something unique in the preaching that was different then what preaching theorists suggested. For example, by comparing the branches within the tree node shown in Figure 7, I saw a connection between his English background and his scripture reading philosophy. In his personal reading, he



How to read the scriptures		7
Apply them to yourself		3
Contextualize, apply, ask, then learn		2
Don't specialize in one book		2
Imagine the Scriptures in your mind		2
intertextuality		4
Look for sacred and precious things		2
Look for verbs		4
Note the order of the stories		2
Read story from different perspectives		2
Read them figuritively		6
Single out words		4
Use your imagination		3

Figure 7. Sample of a tree node created in the analysis.

seemed to focus on literary techniques related to words, imagination, and the reader's perspective. It was concluded later that this was not a strategy that would inform homiletic theory, but it did bring some insight into what influenced Lewis' style.

I also took a broader view of the data by looking at all the tree nodes simultaneously comparing each one to the others searching for relationships and patterns between them that might reveal something unique in Lewis preaching.

In sum, with this primary procedure I used a deductive method and used a rubric taken from the theory and compared Lewis to that theory. I also used an inductive method that required me to analyze the content searching for classes of information related to good preaching but not found in theory.

Primary data source. The data for this primary procedure were collected from four primary sources: (a) 16 video-recorded and five audio recorded sermons (b) interviews, (c) researcher notes and journals, and (d) artifacts.

Audio and video-recorded sermons. There were 16 audio-recorded and five video-recorded sermons used to compare Lewis' preaching to the rubric. Seven were downloaded from the Brigham Young University radio station, six were purchased from an LDS bookstore, and the remaining three were obtained from S&I. Once these items were digitized, they were all transcribed. After transcription, the sermons were uploaded into qualitative analysis software called NVIVO.

Of all the sermons Lewis gave, these 16 were chosen because they were similar in nature and so were the audiences to which Lewis gave them. The sermons were similar in that they were motivational as well as factual. They were also similar in the sense that

they were delivered to a homogenous group of members in the LDS church. Whether the setting was an educational conference, a special audience setting provided by his publisher, or to S&I religious educators at a symposium, the listeners chose to attend his sermons. Though there were professional seminary and institute teachers at the S&I symposiums, many of those teachers were lay members (men and women) who were chosen by their clergy to teach early morning seminary or college institute.

The sermons were also similar in length. The median length of these 16 sermons was 60 minutes. They ranged in length from 27-78 minutes.

To observe Lewis's gestures and eye contact, I also acquired three videotapes of five sermons he offered to religious educators as part of their summer in-service training. I acquired these videos from S&I. The five video sermons that were referred to had a median length of 63 minutes, ranging from 37 minutes to 102 minutes. Each sermon made up a five part series delivered over a period of four days to religious educators. The same group of religious educators attended all four days in an LDS chapel. Unlike the other 16 audio recorded sermons where Lewis spoke from the pulpit, with these five additional sermons he spoke from the floor among the listeners without a pulpit. Since Lewis had little room to move, I did not analyze his body movement.

To ensure that there was not a significant amount of variance between the five video-recorded sermons and the 16 video recorded sermons, I took two subcategories (voice and emotional appeal) and analyzed them with both audio and video recordings and compared the percentages. The audio percentages were placed beside the video percentages, so that the reader could see that there was an insignificant difference

between the audio and video sermons. The results are found among the tables in Chapter IV.

Interviews. As mentioned earlier in the “Description of the Context,” data were also obtained from interviews with Lewis. Four interviews were audio-recorded, one was video-recorded. Two interviews were transcribed. The interviews ranged from ½ hour to 1½ hours long. The total length of all interviews was 6 hours.

Researcher notes and journals. A journal was kept in the NVIVO program as a way to make what Bazeley (2007) called a “ship’s log” of the research journey. The journal included my procedures during the analysis as well as personal insights gleaned from observations.

Artifacts. One of the artifacts used in the research was Lewis’ scriptures. He allowed me to view how he marked them to better understand his delivery.

Secondary Procedure and Data Source

Whereas with the primary procedure previously mentioned I used an inductive and deductive method to analyze the 16 audio-recorded and five video-recorded sermons, with this secondary procedure, however, I used only the inductive method previously mentioned to analyze other sources outside the 16 audio-recorded and five video-recorded sermons. With this secondary analysis, I did *not* compare Lewis’ practice to the rubric to assess if his practice overlapped theory. Furthermore, rather than use the 16 audio-recorded and five video-recorded sermons, with this secondary procedure I analyzed secondary sources.

To analyze everything Lewis published deductively with the rubric was beyond

the scope of this research. However, it was important to be thorough in the research and go beyond the primary source and turn to this second source to read, listen, and analyze everything Lewis preached to better understand his preaching practice, and to perhaps discover if he did anything different than suggested by theory.

Secondary data source. The secondary sources comprised the following: (a) audio recorded sermons (b) books, (c) video-recorded scripture commentaries (d) published articles, and (e) artifacts.

Audio-recorded sermons. Six audio sermons were analyzed in this secondary procedure to discover if Lewis did anything inconsistent with theory. He delivered three of them to S&I religious educators and with his permission they were recorded. Two were purchased from an LDS bookstore, and were delivered in an LDS chapel as part of a non-compulsory event. Three of the sermons were outlined and uploaded into NVIVO software for analysis.

Books. There were also 13 books published by Lewis. Two books were fictional, one was children's literature, and the remaining 10 were theological. With seven of the theological books, I digitized the text and uploaded it into NVIVO for analysis.

Video-recorded scripture commentaries. Lewis published a 2-DVD set of 52 mini lessons on a variety of Book of Mormon topics. Each mini lesson lasted from 8-12 minutes. Thirty-eight mini lessons were transcribed and uploaded into NVIVO. This DVD set was purchased from an LDS bookstore.

Published articles. Lewis published 11 articles with the *Ensign*, an official magazine of the LDS church. All these articles were theological and they were

downloaded from the LDS website. All of them were uploaded into NVIVO for analysis.

Artifacts. Lewis was interviewed by a radio talk-show host on two different occasions about some of his published sermons. Both of these were downloaded from the radio's official website. He was also interviewed by a national newspaper that was published for LDS readers. The digital text of two of the interviews was uploaded into NVIVO. Also, with his permission, his dissertation on author C.S. Lewis was copied and read.

Establishing Credibility

Credibility was established by triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks. Triangulation makes use of an array of sources (documents, diaries, interviews, artifacts, etc.) to corroborate evidence (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2003). This research relied on four resources to triangulate data: (a) interviews with Lewis, (b) his written and recorded homilies (c) artifacts [e.g., markings and notes in his scriptures and his personal library of books] and (d) my own personal research journal.

Peer debriefing also acted as another method to provide an external check in the research process. An outside, disinterested person was utilized to ask me searching questions to identify strengths and weaknesses as well as oversights (Isaac & Michael, 1990). After reviewing my methodology and research with my colleague over the past three years, and giving him Chapter IV and V of the dissertation, he asked questions that helped bring understanding to how my personal bias, perspectives, and values effected the research (Spall, 1998). Though my dissertation committee asked insightful questions

that helped minimize bias and confirm that the findings have merit, it was valuable to the credibility of this research to utilize this individual because of his 18 years of experience as a religious educator (see Appendix B). Because of his experience, it was not required to give him detailed explanations of the context and content of Lewis' preaching.

To ensure that the research had dependability, I also employed member checks. A member check refers to the process of taking the data, analysis, and interpretations back to Lewis so that he could judge the accuracy of the results (Stake, 1995). He was given all of my results for review. This research had dependability because as the researcher, I pulled thick descriptions from Lewis' sermons and comments he made in the interviews. This brings dependability to this research by enabling the readers to participate vicariously with the phenomena in unique ways. With surrogate participation, readers can decide for themselves whether the experience is transferable to their own experience. And if so, they may use it to "fit their sensibility and shape their thinking about their own inquiries" (Eisner, 1991).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to discover to what extent Lewis' practice was congruent or incongruent with homiletic theory. The study used a primary procedure to analyze a primary data source, and a secondary procedure to analyze a secondary data source. The results of those procedures are listed below.

Primary Data Analysis

This portion of the analysis used the primary procedure of analysis discussed in Chapter III which included a deductive method to compare Lewis' practice to core concepts in homiletic theory, and inductive method to find preaching strategies incongruent with homiletic theory. It also used the primary data source which consisted of 16 audio-recorded sermons and five video-recorded sermons.

Deductive Method

Using the deductive method, Lewis' practice was compared to a rubric of ideal preaching created from the literature review in Chapter II. This rubric represented ideal preaching. From the literature, I broke ideal preaching into 6 categories, 39 subcategories, and 58 characteristics. For example, one of the categories is "Arrangement" (see Figure 8).

Under the category, "Arrangement," there are five subcategories that comprise the ideal arrangement. Within each subcategory, there are characteristics. In Figure 8, the

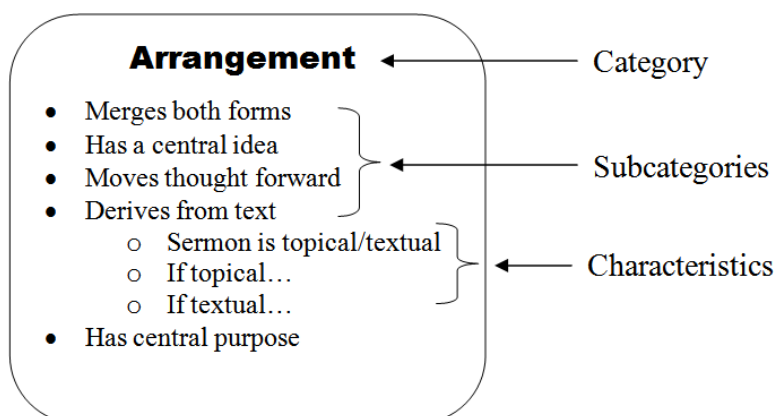


Figure 8. A breakdown of the “Arrangement” category.

characteristics are italicized under subcategories. Not every subcategory had characteristics, but every category had subcategories.

I analyzed each characteristic of those subcategories in one of two ways. First, I looked for a mere presence of those characteristics in each sermon, or counted the number of times they occurred in each sermon.

Using the first technique to analyze for the mere presence of a characteristic in a sermon, if the characteristic was present then it was included as one displaying the core characteristic. The number of sermons out of 16 sermons that had a presence of that characteristic was then converted to a percentage. The percentage was rounded to the nearest whole number then presented in the tables within this chapter.

With the second technique, I analyzed some of the characteristics by counting the number of times they occurred in each or all of the sermons, and then the sum was converted into a percentage and rounded to the nearest whole number. The results are also presented in the tables within this chapter. Therefore, unlike the first technique where I merely report the presence of a subcategory or characteristic, this second

technique counted the frequency of that particular subcategory or characteristic.

The data in this analysis came from the primary sources mentioned in Chapter III: (a) 16 audio-recorded and five video-recorded sermons (b) interviews, (c) researcher notes and journals, and (d) Lewis' scriptures. The 16 audio sermons were analyzed with each category except in the case of two subcategories where it was required to turn to supplemental video recordings to observe Lewis' gestures and eye contact. Lewis' interviews were also analyzed. Throughout this chapter, I share Lewis' emic perspective from those interviews. Last, my personal notes, along with Lewis' scriptures, were analyzed.

The balance of this chapter presents the results of the side-by-side comparison between Lewis' practice and the six categories, their subcategories, and the characteristics within those subcategories. This chapter is broken into the modified version of the six categories (Figure 9) which derive from Broadus' (1897/2005) categories.

Content

Homiletic theorists assert that the ideal content of a sermon will possess five subcategories. The content will be (a) scripture centered, (b) built on generalizations, (c) applicable to listeners, (d) centered on Christ, and (e) infused with hope. This portion of the analysis shows to what extent Lewis' sermons displayed those subcategories.

Scripture-centered. According to theory, scripture-centered sermons should possess at least three characteristics listed in Table 4. As the reader can see, there was a presence of these scripture-centered characteristics in almost all of Lewis sermons except

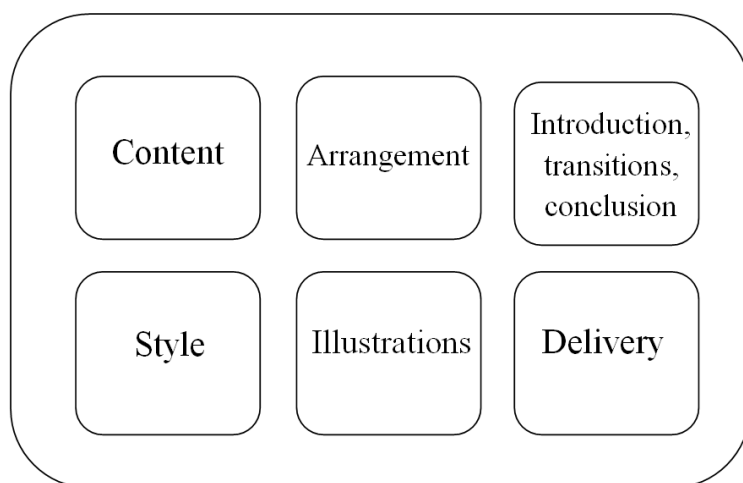


Figure 9. The theoretical framework of the ideal sermon.

Table 4

Scripture-Centered Characteristics

Preaching theory	Lewis' practice (%)
1. The central idea, doctrines, and principles derive from the text.	94
2. Preacher understands probable intent of the biblical authors.	100
3. Preacher identifies probable problem/solution that the biblical author addresses.	100

one. One sermon did not qualify because it was based on the writings of C.S. Lewis rather than scripture text. Lewis did, however, use scripture text in the sermon to show similarities between C.S. Lewis' theology and LDS doctrine.

A good example where Lewis employed the first characteristic comes from a sermon where he used the scripture text as a foundation for the principle he taught. The principle can be summarized as one's desired blessings come as a result of many small and simple acts of obedience rather than one great act. He recounts the story from 2

Kings 5, where Naaman the leper is instructed by Elisha the prophet to dip seven times in the Jordan River to cure Naaman from his leprosy. “So which dip healed him?” Lewis asked. “You know for a long time I answered....’It was the seventh dip.’” However, over time and with further reflection, Lewis said he finally came to the conclusion that “It was not the seventh any more than the third or the fifth or the first. It was the combination of all seven together that brought the desired blessing from the Lord.” He completed the idea with the observation that the summation of all the simple acts whether for oneself or for others is what brings God’s blessings.

How many times does the husband tell a wife, “I love you” before they have an eternal marriage? How many times does a parent tell the child they have value and worth and complement them and praise them before that child gets a sense of who he is? How many...[family nights together] does it take? How many family prayers? How many visits do we make...before the relationships are cemented and lives can be changed and influenced? How many times do you read a scripture story before the insight begins to rise to the surface...?

It is evident that the principle Lewis taught derives from the scripture text since it harmonizes with the text. Just as Naaman’s desired blessing came as a result of a combination of seven small and simple acts rather than one grandiose act, so do listeners sometime bless others with a combination of small and simple acts of goodness rather than just one. In Lewis’ example, the scripture shapes the principle and the principle reflects the scripture.

Lewis also emulated the second characteristic as he demonstrated his ability to understand the original intent of the biblical author. No one knows the exact intent of a biblical author, but through proper exegesis, he or she can proximate understanding. Lewis’ insight was shared with a colleague (see Appendix B) who has taught ancient

scripture for 19 years. When asked if he agreed with Lewis interpretation, “Absolutely...I believe this is consistent with the intent of the author...the approach is an angle that helps me see need for everything God offers or commands.”

Lewis also kept his sermons scripture centered by employing the third characteristic. He took the same problems faced by biblical listeners, and compared their problems to those faced by Christians today. He addressed contemporary problems with biblical solutions. For instance, he shared with listeners his experience with one of his students who approached him for counsel regarding lustful thoughts. Lewis took listeners to 1 John 2:15-17, the same scripture he read to the student: “the world passeth away, and the *lust thereof*: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (King James LDS version). Lewis said, “I was able to say to that young man, ‘You may struggle with these thoughts all your life...You will abide forever, but your problem will not abide forever...in the next life, you won’t struggle with this.’” Lewis not only identified a universal problem in the ancient text, but he also used it to solve a problem that plagues people today.

Built on generalizations. The second subcategory of ideal content focuses on what theorists call *generalizations* (Davis, 1958). Generalizations are statements that reveal characteristics about classes or categories of persons, places, or things (Marzano, 1998). Lewis consistently built his sermons upon universal generalizations (see Table 5). Here are two examples that illustrate Lewis exhibiting the first characteristic. In the first example, he addressed a mistake many young people make. Sometimes, he observed, they lack judgment needful for distinguishing between the enemies in their lives (e.g.,

Table 5

Generalization Characteristics

Preaching theory	Lewis' practice (%)
1. The generalization contains universal truths that apply to a variety of listeners.	100
2. The generalizations are based on scripture.	100
3. The generalizations possess a subject and a compliment	100

bad influences, inappropriate media, and offensive entertainment) and their real friends (e.g., parents, church leaders, and a prophet's counsel). After telling a Book of Mormon story about a group of people that burned a prophet Abinadi in defense of the wicked King Noah, Lewis stated, "Sometimes we burn the 'Abinadi' of our lives in defense of the 'Noah's.'" In this first example, the generalization would apply to a variety of listeners because Lewis addressed a concern many parents have about their children as those children make decisions regarding friends, media, and their use of free time.

In the second example, Lewis expressed the relationship between how God talks to his children, and how his children talk to him. "When I pray, I talk and God listens" Lewis exclaimed, "And when I read the scriptures, God talks, and I'm invited to listen." The second example applies to listeners because generally they want to know God better than they know him. In both examples, Lewis emulated the second characteristic since both principles were implied from the scriptures. Both generalizations satisfy the third characteristic because they possess a subject and a compliment.

In the interview with Lewis, I described the nature and function of a generalization by giving some homiletic definitions and synonyms like "timeless truths"

and “universal truths.” I also spoke in terms Lewis was familiar with by telling him a generalization is what he and other preachers would call a “principle.” After he understood what was meant by a generalization, and he heard the mention of “timeless truth,” he perked up and said, “Actually, I prefer *their* wording (meaning homiletics), ‘timeless truths’ instead of ‘principles.’” He said he might even call them “relevancies.” After listening to him more, it became apparent, that to him, there is a strong relationship between a generalization and its relevancy in the lives of listeners.

Applicable to listeners. Theorists counsel preachers to build their sermons on content that applies to listeners (Chapell, 2004, 2005a; Davis, 1958; Robinson, 2001; Sunukjian, 2007; P. Wilson, 1999, 2004). There was a presence of this subcategory and its related characteristics in 100% of the 16 sermons (see Table 6). In his sermon on dating and marriage, Lewis used a scripture that at first glance seemed irrelevant to the subject he was treating. It pointed out a trap that can snare married couples. The scripture focused on one of Jesus’ apostles named Thomas. He asked listeners which adjective comes to mind when they think of Thomas. He noted how people generally fill the blank in front of Thomas’s name with “doubting,” to create “doubting Thomas.” Lewis then observed, “Poor old Thomas. He is remembered at his worst. Isn’t that sad? Sometimes

Table 6

Characteristics Related to Applying Scriptures to Listeners

Preaching theory	Lewis’ practice
1. The content does not center merely on scriptural facts, or scholarly findings, but on relevant ideas.	100 %
2. The content offers more than a mere explanation of scripture, it reveals why and how it applies to listeners.	100 %

we say in a marriage that's struggling a little bit.... 'Now I know the real you.' And the real you, is usually you at your worst. Right?"

After reading John 11:16, where Thomas proclaims his willingness to die with Jesus, Lewis said, "Now, how else could we fill in the blank for Thomas? *Devoted* Thomas? *Loyal* Thomas? *Sacrificing* Thomas? *Willing-to-to die-for-Jesus* Thomas?" Then Lewis stated, "So who is the real Thomas: *doubting* Thomas or *devoted* Thomas? I like to think the *devoted* Thomas was Thomas at his best and if we can just realize that in our marriages." In this example, Lewis avoided superfluous facts unrelated to the truth he wanted to illustrate. He gave just enough information to lay out the context of the story, and then he proceeded immediately to the truth that had significance and relevance in his listener's lives.

Out of all the subcategories discussed with Lewis in the interviews, this subcategory, he said, ranks "number one" to him. "If it's not relevant.... I'm dead in the water.... If I can't find the relevancy, I failed.... My heart's not in it, and I'm forcing it out. If I find the relevancy, I'm singing it out." Lewis commented that when he searches the scriptures, he looks for what the story tells "us about life, how to live it better, how to think better, how to feel better, how to face challenges, how to be a better parent, how to be a better husband, a better wife."

Centered on Christ. In this subcategory, there are four characteristics requisite for a sermon to qualify as centering on Christ: (a) it centers on some aspect of Christ, (b) the text is not imposed on Christ, (c) Christ is the source of a scriptural character's virtue, and (d) Christ is the source of modern-day people's virtue (see Table 7). As the reader

Table 7

Christ-Centered Characteristics

Preaching theory	Lewis' practice
1. The sermon centers on some aspect of Christ's person, teaching, or work.	100 %
2. The preacher does not impose Christ on the text.	100 %
3. Rather than merely point to the moral character of a scriptural person, the preacher points to the source of that character the scriptures commend.	38 %
4. Rather than ascribe a person's good deeds solely to him or her, the preacher ascribes it to Christ.	86%

can see, Lewis' scores varied among the four characteristics in this subcategory.

The first characteristic stresses that preachers focus on some aspect of Christ's person, teaching, or work. Lewis' consistently emulated this characteristic in all 16 sermons. Though he did not always refer to Christ directly by name, he did refer to Christ's person, teaching, or work. Here is one example where he used an illustration to refer directly to Christ. It was taken from a sermon where he told a story from a book in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. He used the story to illustrate that Jesus is the only way to salvation. It is the story of a young girl Jill, who had a conversation with Aslan the lion, a character who represented Jesus Christ. She was very thirsty as she approached the stream of water only to find the lion perched opposite the bank where she stood. In fear of him, she told him she would go somewhere else to drink. "Then you will die of thirst" said Lewis quoting the lion. Lewis then taught that just as Aslan's stream was the only way to save Jill, Jesus is the only way to save humankind.

The second characteristic of Table 7 suggested by theorists refers to whether the preacher avoids imposing Christ on the text. Imposing Christ on the text refers to the way

that preachers super-allegorize a scripture by making every person, place, or thing a symbol or allusion to Christ. In all 16 sermons, Lewis avoided that mistake.

Concerning the third characteristic, theorists suggest that when preachers speak of a scriptural person's noble character or good deeds, they attribute that character or those deeds to Christ. Though Lewis spoke of scriptural people in all of his sermons, he only spoke of their noble character or good deeds about half of the time. Of those where he did speak of their noble character or good deeds, he attributed a scriptural person's good deeds to Christ in 38% of those sermons.

The last characteristic in Table 7 suggests that when preachers give a contemporary example of a person's goodness or Christ-like action, they attribute that good character or good deed to Christ. Fifty-six percent of the 16 sermons were omitted from this statistical count since he did not refer to a person's good deeds in those sermons. He spoke of individuals in all his sermons, but he commended their virtues in only 44% of the sermons. Out of the 44% where he did extol their virtues, in 86% of those sermons, he ascribed those person's good deeds to God.

After asking Lewis to express his opinion about this characteristic, his response helped verify why there was less presence (38%) of this characteristic in his preaching. "I would let the story teach what the story teaches naturally, and not come of a preconceived notion that says, 'Okay, everything's [sic] got to be Christ.'" Provided one will teach "some things about God" when teaching Gideon, Lewis stated, "but teach Gideon." In other words, teach what the scriptures teach. "I wouldn't put a frame around *every* story that says, 'We're going to learn something about Christ,'" He went on to say:

Maybe we're going to learn something about life. Maybe we're going to learn something about trial. The whole purpose of the scriptures is obviously to teach us about the nature of the God we worship but that doesn't mean every talk that I give has to contain elements of "This is what we learn about God."

Infused with hope. This final subcategory presents to what extent Lewis focused upon concepts, doctrines and principles that offer hope. The criteria used to compare Lewis' practice to homiletic theory consisted of three characteristics listed in Table 8.

As preachers expound upon God's commandments in the scriptures, the first characteristic in Table 8 admonishes them to also speak of God as the source of those commandments, why he gave them, and the positive consequences that follow when they are kept (P. Wilson, 1995b). In all 16 sermons, Lewis focused on these attributes related to God. He often spoke of God's "goodness, kindness, mercy... patience, and his willingness to save...redeem and forgive."

With the second characteristic, Lewis continually focused on solutions rather than the listener's problems, that is, the problems their personal sins and weaknesses may cause. Lewis set forth God's commandments, but God's goodness, kindness, mercy, and divine help dominated his sermon points.

Table 8

Characteristics that Infuse Listeners with Hope

Preaching theory	Lewis' practice (%)
1. Rather than merely proclaiming obedience, preachers should proclaim the source, reason, and the effects of obedience.	100
2. The sermon focuses more upon God's solutions rather than the listener's problems.	100
3. Rather than tell listeners what they should, must, or ought to do, the preacher tells them what they can do with God's help.	100

Rather than preachers merely telling listeners what they *ought to*, *need to*, *must do*, or *should do*, the third characteristic in Table 8 advises preachers to tell listeners what they *can* do with God's help (McDill, 1994). I measured how often Lewis used do-better phrases and can-do phrases in his 16 sermons. After NVIVO tallied the frequency and located where the words and phrases were used, I read the sentences before and after the hits to understand the context in which Lewis used do-better and can-do words.

As can be seen from Table 9, Lewis used can-do hopeful words and phrases more than the do-better type in 75% of the sermons. Out of 107 words and phrases, 69% of them were can-do. Here are three examples of can-do phrases Lewis used: "We *can* 'eat bread' with the Savior now," "Your outgoings into the storms of life *can* be without...

Table 9

Frequency Count for Can-Do and Do-Better Words and Phrases

Sermon	"Can"	"We need to"	"Ought"	"We must"	"We should"
Sermon 1	7	0	2	0	0
Sermon 2	1	1	0	0	0
Sermon 3	0	2	0	2	0
Sermon 4	9	2	2	0	1
Sermon 5	0	0	0	1	0
Sermon 6	5	0	0	3	0
Sermon 7	2	0	1	0	0
Sermon 8	2	1	0	2	3
Sermon 9	22	1	0	3	3
Sermon 10	10	0	0	6	0
Sermon 11	8	0	0	5	0
Sermon 12	5	0	0	0	0
Sermon 13	12	0	0	1	0
Sermon 14	15	0	0	0	0
Sermon 15	4	0	0	3	0
Sermon 16	5	0	0	5	0
Total	107	7	5	29	7

hesitation” and “We *can* make our stand and not fear” (emphasis added). All three of these examples tell listeners what they can do with God and through God’s help.

When Lewis was told in the interview how preaching theorists assert that a sermon should be filled with hope, he responded, “I call it the ‘Inviting Spirit’ and I would agree with that.” He went on to explain that before he ever preaches, he reminds himself, “Invite, don’t rail. There’s enough guilt....” Lewis wants listeners saying as they leave his sermons, “Isn’t the gospel wonderful and God is good and there’s hope for me” rather than “I’m not doing that; I should be doing better.” It is what he called, “the guilt-inducing sermon versus the invitation sermon.”

Summary. Homiletic theorists assert that the ideal *content* of a sermon should possess five subcategories. The content should be (a) scripture centered, (b) built on generalizations, (c) applicable to listeners, (d) centered on Christ, (e) and infused with hope. Respecting the first subcategory, there was a presence of the scripture-centered characteristics in 100% of Lewis sermons. Regarding the second subcategory, Lewis consistently built his sermons upon universal generalizations, that is, 100% of the 16 sermons had a presence of universal generalizations. Although a generalization, by nature, must be general enough that it is “timeless” as theorists call it, to Lewis, what makes it function as a timeless and universal truth is its relevancy (Sunukjian, 2007, p. 51). Not only did the generalizations have universal appeal, but they also derived from the scripture text.

Using the third subcategory—is the content applicable to learners—there was a presence of this subcategory and its related characteristics in 100% of the sermons. Lewis

considered this subcategory (relevancy) the single most important aspect of his teaching.

Considering the fourth subcategory, that the sermon should center on Christ, 100% of Lewis sermons had a presence of the first two characteristics. He scored high because he focused on Christ's person, teaching, or work in every sermon, and he avoided imposing Christ on the text. On the other hand, he scored low with only 38% of sermons employing the third characteristic because he did not attribute a scriptural person's noble character or good deeds to Christ.

Using the last subcategory, I discovered that Lewis imbued 100% of his sermons with hope. Not only were the characteristics present, but the data indicated that Lewis used can-do hopeful words and phrases more than do-better type in 75% of the sermons. Of all these words and phrases used, both can-do hopeful and do-better type, 69% of them were can-do hopeful phrases.

Arrangement

Whether preachers shape their sermons into deductive, propositional arguments; or inductive, narrative plots; homileticians suggest that preachers shape their sermons so that the arrangement (a) includes both inductive and deductive forms (b) has a central idea (c) moves thought forward (d) derives from the text, (e) and has a central purpose (Chapell, 2005a; Craddock, 2001; Robinson, 2001).

Includes both inductive and deductive forms. This first subcategory counsels preachers to merge both deductive and inductive forms (Allen, 1992; Chapell, 1993; C. Miller, 2006; Robinson, 2001; P. Wilson, 1995b). Since some theorists do prefer one form or the other, I opted to not only present whether there was a presence of both forms

in each sermon, but to also present which form dominated the sermons. This data provides a clearer picture of the arrangements of Lewis' sermons.

To determine if there was a presence of both inductive and deductive forms within the same sermon, I first located each major/minor point in all 16 sermons. This was accomplished by creating a detailed outline of each sermon. I then counted the number of points within each sermon outline. There were 113 major/minor points. Each major/minor point was then labeled as either inductive or deductive. If a sermon had a presence of both inductive and deductive forms, then that sermon qualified as representing theory with this subcategory. According to the data, 88% of Lewis' sermons had a presence of both inductive and deductive major/minor points.

I also discovered which form dominated each sermon. This was done by comparing the number of inductive to deductive major/minor points. If there was a majority (anything more than half the group) of one form over another in a single sermon then that sermon was labeled either inductive or deductive depending on which form dominated. A side-by-side comparison is presented in Table 10. Using the majority rule, the data indicate that 37% of his sermons were inductive, 50% were deductive, and the remaining 13% had an equal number of inductive and deductive major/minor points.

To discover what percentage of all 113 major/minor points were either inductive or deductive, I simply counted the number of inductive and deductive points and converted the frequency count into a percentage. Using the totals in the table above, the reader can see that 46% of Lewis' principles were inductive and 54% were deductive.

Table 10

Inductive or Deductive Major/Minor Points

The sermons	Inductive	Deductive	Inductive sermon	Deductive sermon	Both inductive and deductive sermon
Sermon 1	4	0	x		
Sermon 2	6	1	x		
Sermon 3	3	5		x	
Sermon 4	7	10		x	
Sermon 5	1	5		x	
Sermon 6	1	6		x	
Sermon 7	2	3		x	
Sermon 8	3	3			x
Sermon 9	5	4	x		
Sermon 10	2	3		x	
Sermon 11	3	5		x	
Sermon 12	0	5		x	
Sermon 13	6	3	x		
Sermon 14	4	2	x		
Sermon 15	3	2	x		
Sermon 16	3	3			x
Totals	53	60	6	8	2
Percentile	46%	54%	37%	50%	13%

Thus, Lewis' sermons lean slightly toward a deductive form when taking an aggregate sum of all 113 major/minor points.

When discussing this subcategory, I asked Lewis whether he leans more toward preaching deductively or inductively. His response helped confirm the results of the data. "I would guess that I'm about equal." His response was congruent with the data since out of 113 major/minor points, 53 were inductive and 60 were deductive.

The arrangement of the sermon has a central idea. Theorists also suggested that sermons possess a central idea (Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922). To assess whether

Lewis' sermons had a central idea, I took the central idea introduced at the beginning of the sermon, and set it beside each major point to see if he carried it through the sermon. If the major points were divisions of the central idea, then that sermon qualified as one having a central idea that unified the sermon. I found that 100% of the sermons had a presence of this subcategory.

When asked about the sermon's unity, Lewis used a few metaphors to help describe his view of this subcategory. "I call it a handle on the suitcase.... I want to give them [listeners] the handle, and then...[they] can put all the stuff in the case and carry it away easier." He also called it the "hub of the wheel" with major and minor points serving as spokes, or the "hanger" upon which preachers hang their ideas. "I just like things neat and orderly and packaged" Lewis stated. "I consciously am looking for the unity, the single thing that I can tie everything to. I don't like, here's an idea, here's an idea, [and] here's an idea." Lewis did mention that on occasion, when teaching the scriptures, he will say to his listeners, "Now, there's about five different ideas I want out of here, so I'm going to give you five mini lessons today." And "that's what I'll call them, mini lessons. They're all separate and distinct from one another.... And I'll just do little quick things."

The arrangement moves thought forward. According to homiletic theorists, the ideal sermon arrangement also moves listener thought forward in a logical and natural order (Chapell, 2005a; P. Wilson, 1995b). For example, preachers can move listener thought theologically (from justice to mercy), chronologically, spatially (lesser to greater), or emotionally (beginning to climax).

To determine if and how Lewis moved listener thought, I analyzed the outlines and transcriptions of each sermon. By comparing Lewis' sermon arrangement to the criteria in homiletic theory, I discovered that 100% of his sermons had the features necessary to move listener thought forward in a progressive order. Looking at the sermon arrangements from a macro view, I discovered in 13 of the 16 sermons, Lewis' arrangements were structured to move listener thought theologically. In the remaining three sermons, they were structured to move thought both theologically and chronologically.

By probing the sermon transcriptions on a micro level, it was learned that within each sermon there were minor movements within the macro movements. For example, in one sermon there was a theological movement pervading the sermon, but within that theological movement, there were minor movements. In one minor point his sermon structure was such that it could move listener thought *chronologically* through Genesis 24 to teach about Rebekah's "camel-watering" moment, a moment of personal sacrifice that eventually brought her a future spouse. However, later on, he employed the *cause-and-effect* concept to teach young single adults that if they are in love "with a feeling" more than the "person," they may choose amiss a spouse.

In short, according to the criteria set forth in theory, 100% of Lewis sermons had the requisite features necessary to move thought forward in a natural order. The overarching conceptual arrangement was theological, but within that overarching arrangement, he employed other conceptual arrangements that had the capacity to move thought forward.

When asked if Lewis consciously created an arrangement that seeks to move listener thought forward, Lewis responded, “Yeah, I do that consciously. I’m aware of how the pieces fit with one another and I like...an idea to logically lead.” He continued to explain how the main points are logically connected in his mind so that he “can naturally transition from one point to the next.” Lewis said,

Sometimes I’ll put all the ideas on a piece of paper. And then I’ll do little arrows. I’ll say, “This leads little more naturally to that, to that.” And I’ll try to order them in a way that I think they build on one another or they relate to one another, or there is a question left [that listeners want answered].... Order is a big deal.

The sermon form derives from the text. This portion of the analysis presents data that show the degree to which the sermon derived from the scripture text. Homiletic theorists suggest that for a sermon to derive from the text, it will have one of the three qualifying characteristics: (a) it will be either topical or textual, (b) if it is topical its central idea will come from a scriptural passage, and (c) if it is textual, the central idea and the main points come from the text (Allen, 1992; Kaiser, 1981). According to Chapel (2005a), a *topical* sermon takes its central idea from a scriptural passage. Thus, the sermons divisions come from the nature of the subject rather than the distinctions of the text. In a *textual* sermon, not only does the central idea come from the scriptural text, but so does the sermon’s divisions.

Since all of Lewis’ sermons were either topical or textual (81% were topical and 19% were textual), then 100% of Lewis sermons manifested the first characteristic (see Table 11).

It would appear from the percentage of the second characteristic in Table 11 that Lewis does not root the central idea of his sermons on scriptural text, but that percentage

Table 11

Characteristics of “Deriving from the Text”

Preaching theory	Lewis’ practice (%)
1. The sermon form is either topical or textual.	100
2. If a sermon is topical, it takes the central idea from a scripture passage. The main points come from the subject’s nature rather than text’s distinctions.	58
3. If the sermon is textual, it not only derives the central idea from the text but also the sermon’s main points.	100

could be misleading. First, the 58% was taken from only 12 of the 16 talks. Four of them were disqualified from the count since three of them were textual and the fourth sermon was focused on the theology of C.S. Lewis rather than on scripture. That could also be misleading because with each of the 12 topical sermons, Lewis did not cite a specific scripture and show listeners which word or phrase represented his central idea, however, his central ideas were based upon gospel principles that came from the scriptures. For example, here are some gospel topics in the 16 sermons: (a) using ancient scripture to solve modern-day problems, (b) marriage, (c) building Zion and following the prophet, (d) building your testimony of Christ, and (e) temples of God are houses of learning and instruction. Every one of those topics was scripture-centered. Therefore, even though Lewis did not specifically point out a scripture verse as the topic of his sermons every time, he did base his sermons on gospel topics and supported those topics with scripture verses throughout his sermons.

The sermon has a central purpose. This last portion of the data helps the reader see and understand to what extent Lewis’ sermons have a central purpose. By analyzing

the outlines and the actual transcriptions of the sermons, I learned that 100% of the 16 sermons had a central purpose. Lewis would often state in the introduction the central purpose of his sermon. Here are four examples: (a) “Today, I would like to talk about those three basic foundations of the gospel: faith, hope, and charity—with a major emphasis on hope,” (b) “There are five observations I would make about the preparation period that I have learned as I have watched these young people...,” (c) “I’d like to share with you a few thoughts on prayer and communing with our Father in heaven and some things about him that I hope will be helpful to you...,” and (d) “Today I want to talk to you little bit about some kinds of “glasses” or helps that young people in particular need...” In these examples taken from Lewis introductions, the reader can see how he established his purpose early in the sermons. It was important to Lewis for his readers to know his objectives upfront.

Summary. The data indicated that Lewis did merge both inductive and deductive forms into 88% of his sermon arrangements. Out of the 113 points, 46% were inductive, and 54% were deductive. By looking at the majority of the major/minor points that were either inductive or deductive, 37% were inductive, 50% were deductive, and the remaining 13% merged both forms equally.

The data also indicated that Lewis unified the parts of the sermon with a central idea. In 100% of the 16 sermons, the main points of each sermon were congruous with their central ideas. Moreover, the data revealed that Lewis moved thought forward in 100% of his sermons. On a macro level, he moved listener thought theologically and on a micro level, he moved thought with a variety of conceptual arrangements. In addition,

100% of his sermons were either topical or textual. Finally, 100% of the 16 sermons had an overall purpose and objective.

Introduction, Transition, and Conclusion

Though introductions, transitions, and conclusions are one category in the modified version of Broadus' (1897/2005) categories, this portion of the analysis breaks the category into three segments: introduction, transition, and conclusion. These divisions help the reader easily locate and identify results for any one segment of this category.

Introduction. According to homiletic theory, the ideal introduction (a) is brief, (b) begins with the listeners rather than the scripture text, (c) is separated from the extemporaneous remarks, and (d) does not open with apologies or excuses. It is these subcategories and their related characteristics to which Lewis' practice was compared.

Introduction is brief. Though homiletic theorists differ slightly in what they consider the ideal length of an introduction, they do agree that it should be brief (Chapell, 2005a; Davis, 1958; Edwards, 2005b; Low, 2006; Robinson, 2001; Stanley & Jones, 2006; P. Wilson, 1999). Theorists give the ideal length in minutes, sentences, and paragraphs, but this analysis measures Lewis' introductions in minutes only. So that future researchers could compare the length of their participant's introductions to the lengths of Lewis' introductions, I opted to measure length in minutes rather than number of sentences or paragraphs. Measuring in minutes appeared to be a more accurate measurement for comparative purposes since sentence length might vary between preachers, and researchers may disagree where paragraphs begin and end when transcribing sermons.

To measure the length of Lewis introductions, I counted from the first word of the sermon (after adlib remarks) to the last word of the sentence where he introduced the central idea. To calculate the ideal length of a sermon in minutes, I used Davis' (1958) criteria. He suggested a 2-minute introduction for a 20-25 minute sermon. The median length of Lewis' sermons was 60 minutes, and since Davis did not give the ideal length for a 60-minute sermon, I merely took his suggested introduction length for a 20- to 25-minute sermon and applied it proportionally to Lewis 60-minute sermon. Assuming the introduction is proportional to the sermon length, the ideal length of Lewis' introductions should be 6 minutes or less. According to the data, 100% of Lewis sermons met the requirement of theory (see Table 12).

Table 12

Length of Lewis' Introductions

The sermons	Minutes
Sermon 1	5:35
Sermon 2	4:31
Sermon 3	1:36
Sermon 4	3:40
Sermon 5	1:25
Sermon 6	2:00
Sermon 7	3:35
Sermon 8	4:00
Sermon 9	3:36
Sermon 10	4:00
Sermon 11	3:58
Sermon 12	3:20
Sermon 13	4:55
Sermon 14	3:50
Sermon 15	1:39
Sermon 16	2:58
Mean	3:38 minutes
Ideal time	Less than 6 minutes

“Theorists say that the introduction should be brief,” I said to Lewis and he responded with “Amen.... I want them in the scriptures immediately.” When asked what “immediately” meant to him he said “within 5 minutes.” To Lewis, an introduction functions as “something quick to catch their attention. But then you get them right into the scriptures.” His response helped verify the data since they show that Lewis’ sermons are short when measured in time.

Introduction begins with listeners rather than scripture text. This next subcategory describes how the preacher’s introduction should begin with listeners rather than scripture text. According to homiletic theory, there are three characteristics that define this subcategory: (a) the introduction should begin with the components in Table 1 in Chapter II, (b) it should create a desire to listen, and (c) it should orientate listeners to what they will hear in the sermon.

The first characteristic describes the way in which preachers should select from a variety of attention-getting devices (see Table 4, p. 37) to pique listener interest in the introduction. An attention-getting device can be a story, contemporary issue, striking statistic, or provocative quotation. Out of the 16 sermons, Lewis employed at least one of these devices in 88% of his introductions (see Table 13).

Table 13

Beginning with Listeners Rather than Scripture Text

Preaching theory	Lewis’ practice (%)
1. Sermon begins with an attention-getting devices in Table 1.	88
2. Introduction creates a desire to listen.	88
3. Orientates listeners to what they will hear in the sermon.	100

To evaluate the second characteristic, I had to use my own intuition and experience as a religious educator/speaker to assess whether Lewis created a desire to listen. As the researcher, I concluded that Lewis' introductions did have the potential to create a desire in his audience to listen in 88% of the 16 introductions. I give an example below of this characteristic. Lewis employed the third characteristic in 100% of his sermons.

The following example demonstrates the three characteristics. By not diving into the scriptures immediately, but rather, telling a story first, Lewis demonstrated the first characteristic of this subcategory. "I used to like to play chess a great deal when I was little and I loved the knights," Lewis remembered. "I just thought the knight was the finest piece on the board," he said, "So, I always led with my knights and always fought with the knights." Because of playing his knights, Lewis said, "I didn't win a lot of games." Lewis failed to win because he failed to lead with the most powerful piece—the queen. "I liken that to society today...[it] has great problems that...we fight...with other agents that are ineffective—counseling, community efforts, school and government programs—but the 'queen' to solve the problems of society today is the family." This story had the capacity to create a desire in the audience to listen. It fulfills the second characteristic in Table 13 because according to homiletic theory, human-interest stories coming from the lives of the preacher or someone else are often the most dependable and effective means for creating desire to listen (Robinson, 2001; Steimle, Niedenthal, & Rice, 1980)

After Lewis shared why his chess strategies were flawed and related it to society's

misplaced efforts, he then emulated the third characteristic in Table 13 by orienting listeners about what they were about to hear. “I think the greatest weapon that the Lord has given to us to protect the family and therefore to protect society are these books [scriptures] that we all love,” he stated. “So, I would like to direct most of my comments to the power of these scriptures” he said. This introduction not only told what Lewis would talk about, but what in general he would say about it (Davis, 1958). In short, with this introduction, Lewis used an attention-getting device, created a desire in listeners to learn, and previewed the sermon whole.

Introduction is separated from extemporaneous remarks. When preachers give adlib remarks at the beginning of their sermon to put listeners at ease, this next subcategory suggests that they pause before they delve into their sermons so that listeners do not confuse their extemporaneous remarks with the sermon’s introduction (Chapell, 2005a; C. Miller, 2006). Of the 16 sermons, Lewis only gave extemporaneous remarks in five of those sermons. Of those five sermons, he separated adlib remarks from the introduction 40% of the time with a brief pause before launching into the introduction.

Introduction does not open with apologies or excuses. Because preachers cannot persuade congregations by invoking pity in them, homiletic theorists counsel preachers to never open with apologies or excuses (Blackwood, 1948; Broadus, 1897/2005; Robinson, 2001). Lewis avoided this homiletic faux pas in 100% of the 16 sermons.

Transition. “Transition” is another segment of the “introduction, transition, and conclusion” category. A transition in homiletic theory refers to a class of words and phrases that link ideas. Since linking ideas together is the major function of a transitional

word or phrase, I sought to identify those transitional words and phrases in Lewis' sermons that perform that function. Along with this segment, there are two subcategories that help make a transitional word or phrase effective at linking ideas. They are as follows: (a) transitions should signal a new direction of thought, and (b) transitions should look back at previous ideas to prepare listeners for new ideas.

Preachers use transitional words and phrases to connect ideas within their sermons. To discover whether Lewis used transitional words and phrases, I analyzed the 16 sermons searching for certain transitional words and phrases suggested by Craddock (2001, pp. 122-123). NVIVO was used to make a frequency count and to locate each transitional word and phrase. Once the words and phrases were identified, I previewed the context in which the words and phrases were used to ensure that they were used as transitional words or phrases. Only those words and phrases that linked together ideas were included in the final count listed in Table 14. Though Lewis did not use every transitional phrase suggested by Craddock, there was a presence of transitional phrases in 100% of all 16 sermons. As the reader can see from the table, he avoided using, "but," "moreover," and "in addition," but did use, "so" 557 times and "now" 523 times (see Table 14).

The first subcategory of this segment states that the preacher's transitions should signal to listeners a new direction of thought. According to the data, there was a presence of this subcategory in 100% of the 16 sermons. The second subcategory states that the preacher's transitions should look back at previous ideas to prepare listeners for new

Table 14

Frequency of Transitional Phrases in all 16 Sermons

Transitional word/phrase	Frequency	Percent
However	9	1
Yet	52	4
But	0	0
Moreover	0	0
In addition	0	0
Also	92	7
In fact	3	1
So	557	43
Therefore	38	3
Now	523	41
Total	1,274	100

ideas. The data shows that there was also a presence of this subcategory in 100% of Lewis' 16 sermons.

In the interview, Lewis' comments not only helped bring credibility that I assessed his preaching accurately, but they also revealed why he used transitions. Before I revealed to him the number of times he used the word "now," Lewis said he used the word "now" the most. After sharing with him the data, which suggested he did employ "so" and "now" the most, he commented, "Yeah, those are my big ones." For Lewis, "now" functions not only as a way to transition from one idea to another, but as way to signal to listeners that what he will say next is essential. "Usually 'now' says, 'I'm going to try to make a point or 'What does this mean?'"

Conclusion. "Conclusion" is the last segment of this category. According to homiletic theory, the ideal conclusion will have the following subcategories: (a) it comes

full circle, (b) it highlights the main points of the sermon, (c) it tells listeners what they should do with what they now know, (d) it ends when preachers announce the end, (e) it ends with hope, (f) it is brief, (g) it places the most meaningful sentence last, and (h) it ends with a high level of personal, candid, and intimate language. Table 15 lists the overall results on Lewis' conclusions. Following this table is a brief definition of each subcategory, with some additional information regarding the data of that particular subcategory, and some examples.

The conclusion comes full circle. This subcategory refers to the way in which preachers conclude with a brief statement that orients listeners to where they have been, where they are, and where they should go (Myers, 1988). As reported in Table 15, Lewis brought the sermon full circle in 94% of his conclusions. In the following example, Lewis attempted to bring listeners back to the sermon's beginning by echoing an earlier thought gave in the introduction. In the introduction he said

Scriptures are a lamp and the world is a dark place.... The scriptures are an iron

Table 15

Subcategories of the Ideal Conclusion

Preaching theory	Lewis' practice (%)
1. It comes full circle.	94
2. It highlights all the main points of the sermon.	50
3. It tells listeners what they should do with what they now know.	94
4. It ends when preachers announces it is the end.	81
5. It ends with hope.	100
6. It is brief.	81
7. It places the most meaningful sentence last.	56
8. It ends with a high level of personal, candid, intimate language.	100

rod and the world is like a raging river.... The scriptures are a sword and life is a battlefield.... The scriptures are manna and the world is a wilderness...and the scriptures are a compass and we are on a journey. And in the conclusion, he circled back to these former ideas: “May the light be held high; may you have a firm grip on the iron rod; may you swing the sword well; and use the compass; and feast on the manna that God gave us in these wonderful books.” As the reader can see, the conclusion echoes the introduction. When asked if he strives to bring the sermon full circle in the conclusion Lewis replied quickly, “That’s what I try to do.”

The conclusion highlights all the main points of the sermon. This subcategory refers to the way in which the conclusion recaps the sermon’s main points as a kind of review. Observing Lewis’ practice revealed that he stated all the main points in only 50% of the 16 conclusions. Though he often referred back to the central idea stated in the introduction, and he always highlighted some of the main points, he did not highlight all of the main points.

Sharing with Lewis that there was a presence of this subcategory in only 50% of his sermons surprised him. “I would of have thought it would of been more than 50%” he replied. “If it’s just one point then I’ll just come full circle. But if it’s multiple points, I like to reiterate the multiple points.” From Lewis’ comments, apparently, he strives to review the points with the listeners in the conclusion.

The conclusion tells listeners what they should do with what they now know. A good conclusion not only turns listener’s thoughts backward to the sermon’s highlights, but it also inspires listeners to carry the truth forward. Unlike a good introduction that

gets listeners ready to hear, a good conclusion gets them ready to act (Broadus, 1897/2005; Stott, 1982). In 94% of Lewis' conclusions, he told listeners what they should do with what he preached. For example, in a talk addressing young single adults about preparing themselves and finding a proper marriage companion, Lewis concluded telling listeners what to do with what they now know about selecting a marriage companion. In the conclusion, he gave an illustration that compared the marriage covenant to a fruit jar. God gives every married couple a kind of spiritual "fruit jar," he said. The jar represents the potential of the marriage, fruit placed in the jar represents the good works performed by the couple in each other's behalf, and the sealing of the jar represents God "sealing" the couple together for eternity. "Fill the jar with all your love and your compromise and your forgiveness and your sharing and your life together," Lewis suggested to listeners, and "one day you will come to the end of life and you will bring that jar before [God]... and you will say, 'We want to preserve [our love].... Seal our marriage.'" Lewis seemed to say, "I've told you how to become the right spouse, how to select the right spouse, so go do it, but here's one more thing. Here's what you should do when you find that lovely person with which the Lord will give you a jar." Since the jar represents the potential of the married couple, Lewis' conclusion goes beyond what listeners should do in the present with the new information and it points them to the future day when they and their new spouses receive that figurative fruit jar. Therefore, it tells listeners what to do in the future with what they now know—be the right person, find the right person, marry the right person, and "Fill the jar with all your love."

The conclusion ends when preachers announce it is the end. According to this

subcategory, the conclusion should do what it is supposed to do—conclude. Too often, preachers tell their congregations they intend to conclude then fail to keep their promise (Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922; Robinson, 2001). The data show that in 81% of Lewis' 16 sermons, he ended soon (within 6 minutes) after he indicated he was concluding with phrases like “I conclude with...,” “Now one final quick thought...,” or “May the Lord bless you that....”

The conclusion ends with hope. Even if the sermon must deal with solemn subjects like death, divorce, repentance, or sexual immorality, the final words of the sermon should always ring with hope (Blackwood, 1948). Using this as a criterion, 100% of Lewis' sermons ended hopeful. One can get a sense of how Lewis imbued his conclusions with hope by observing a sermon conclusion that refers back to an idea taught in the body of the sermon. The sermon emphasized, that with God's help even “walk-on-water” impossibilities become possible. “May we doubt not, may we fear not,” concluded Lewis, “May we, like Peter, carry always in our heart, the desire to do what our Master does.” Moreover, “And know that if he [God] does it—no matter how difficult no matter how impossible—if he does it and he asks us to do it, even be perfect..., *we can do it.*” In every conclusion like this one, Lewis encouraged listeners with hope that God would bless them, help them, and lead them.

The conclusion is brief. This subcategory is an ideal put forth by theorists that counsels preachers to conclude the sermon in a timely manner. Davis (1958) suggested a 2-minute conclusion for a 25-minute sermon, but since Lewis' sermons were 60-minute sermons, I merely took Davis' 2-minute conclusion per 20-25 minute sermon as a

proportion to apply to Lewis 60-minute sermon. Assuming the length of the conclusion is proportional to the sermon length, the ideal length of Lewis' conclusions should be somewhere around 8-10% of 60 minutes which is 6 minutes or less. According to the data, 81% of Lewis sermons met the requirement of theory (see Table 16).

To measure conclusion length, it became necessary to determine where Lewis initiated the conclusion in each sermon. In 12 of the 16 sermons, the conclusions were identified by phrases Lewis employed like "I conclude with...", "I'll finish here...", "May the Lord bless you that...", and "I would leave you with this thought..." In four of the sermons where these types of phrases were absent, it became necessary to simply make an estimate regarding where the conclusion began. Since he always ended with a

Table 16

Length of Lewis' Conclusions

The sermons	Minutes
Sermon 1	6:07
Sermon 2	5:48
Sermon 3	1:48
Sermon 4	1:23
Sermon 5	3:25
Sermon 6	9:07
Sermon 7	5:21
Sermon 8	2:37
Sermon 9	6:18
Sermon 10	5:09
Sermon 11	1:30
Sermon 12	1:12
Sermon 13	1:15
Sermon 14	5:23
Sermon 15	1:54
Sermon 16	1:13
Mean	3:01 minutes
Ideal time	Less than 6 minutes

short and “quick thought,” or one “last idea,” I simply located where he began his final idea, not a main point, but a short and “quick” idea then tagged that position as the beginning of the end. The length of the conclusion extended from that tagged position to the last word of the sermon.

The conclusion places the most meaningful sentence last. According to theorists, whatever the style and content of the sermon’s final sentence, the sermon as a whole must lead up to it, and this last sentence must stand out boldly and forcefully, more than any other sentence (Broadus, 1897/2005; Chapell, 2005a). This is another subcategory where as the researcher I had to use my experience as a religious educator and speaker to determine if Lewis’ last sentence was the most meaningful. Using the last sentence as the criterion for this subcategory, 56% of Lewis’ 16 sermons made the last sentence the most meaningful.

The conclusion ends with a high level of personal, candid, intimate language. Buttrick (1987) stated that conclusions are usually of a personal nature, where preachers speak to their congregations with open candor. It is a moment where preachers use language that seeks to foster emotional intimacy between preacher and listener. According to the data, there was a presence of this subcategory in 100% of Lewis sermons. Though Lewis always seemed to speak in a plainspoken, personal manner throughout his sermons, toward the end of his sermons, his language and voice seemed to become a little bigger, more meaningful, and more intimate. “I look forward to that moment in my own life, and look forward to it for all of you,” he said in a pleasant and personal tone that seemed to speak to each listener personally rather than to the

congregation as a whole.

Summary

Following is a summary of results listed by the three segments of this category.

Introduction. There were seven subcategories and characteristics that comprise the ideal introduction. The first subcategory relates to its brevity. When measured in time, 100 % of Lewis's introductions had the ideal length. The second subcategory looks at how the introduction begins with listeners rather than the scripture text. Out of 16 sermons, 88 % of Lewis sermons used attention-getting devices, created a desire to listen, and orientated listeners to what they would hear.

The third subcategory describes the way in which preachers separate adlib remarks from the actual introduction. Of those five sermons where he offered adlib remarks, he separated them from the introduction 40% of the time with a brief pause. Finally, the fourth subcategory describes the way in which preachers should avoid opening with apologies or excuses. Lewis avoided this mistake in 100% of his sermons.

Transition. There were two subcategories of ideal transitions. The first one states that transitions should link together ideas. Lewis used 1,274 transitional words and phrases in 16 sermons. In 100% of 16 sermons, Lewis' transitions signaled to listeners he was initiating a new direction of thought, and in 100% of his sermons, they looked back at previous thoughts to prepare listeners for new ideas.

Conclusion. There are eight subcategories that comprise the ideal conclusion. With the first subcategory, Lewis brought the sermon full circle in 94% of his conclusions by taking listeners back to the sermon's beginning and by echoing an earlier

thought gave in the introduction. With the second subcategory, he highlighted all of the main points in 50% of the 16 conclusions. In 94% of Lewis' conclusions, he told listeners what they should do with what he preached which demonstrated the third subcategory. Moreover, with the fourth subcategory, in 81% of his sermons he ended briefly after he indicated he was concluding. Lewis employed the fifth subcategory in 100% of his sermons by ending hopeful. Using the sixth subcategory as an assessment it was learned that 81% of his sermons ended briefly. The seventh category assessment revealed that 56% of Lewis' 16 sermons made the last sentence the most meaningful. And last, Lewis ended with personal and intimate prose in 100% of the 16 sermons.

Style

The term style, according to homiletic theory, refers to both the preacher's personality and his or her preference of words (Chapell, 2005a; Davis, 1958; L. Hogan & Reid, 1999; Larson, 2005e; Robinson & Larson, 2005). Homiletic theorists maintain that the subcategories that comprise an ideal style are: (a) naturalness, (b) openness, (c) image-laden words, (d) figurative language, (e) and simple words. This section of the analysis presents data that discloses to what extent Lewis' language contains the aforementioned subcategories of style.

Naturalness. Homiletic theorists posit that there are two characteristics that comprise this subcategory: (a) the preacher's words are unforced, unrehearsed, and genuine, and (b) the sermon sounds like a lively and casual conversation. As the reader can see in Table 17, there was a presence of these two characteristics in 100% of the 16 sermons.

Table 17

Naturalness Characteristics

Preaching theory	Lewis' practice (%)
1. The preacher's words are unforced, unrehearsed, and genuine.	100
2. The sermon sounds like a lively and casual conversation.	100

Because of the difficulty in measuring whether Lewis' language was unforced, unrehearsed, and genuine, as the researcher, I simply relied on my own experience to gauge to what extent Lewis's practice matched this first characteristic. Perusing the audio files and transcriptions revealed that there was a presence of this characteristic in 100% of Lewis' 16 sermons. The way he paused, the inflection of his voice, the tone of his words, and the feeling he put into certain statements made Lewis' words seem heartfelt and sincere.

Assessing the second characteristic, that is, to what extent Lewis' language sounded like a casual conversation, I looked for moments when he spoke directly to his audience. In doing so, I discovered a pattern. He used two words "right" and "you" repeatedly. "Right" seemed to function as a way to elicit audience participation. For example, Lewis said, "I want God to still all my storms. Can he do it? There are precedents. *Right?* He can say, 'Peace be still.'" When he related how his mother raised him "the Lord's way," he said, "So, you can imagine how I was raised. You could probably tell me my mother's tactic. Right? We had family prayer, and we read the scriptures together...." In both accounts, he solicited a response from listeners collectively as if he was having a conversation with them individually.

Lewis also gave his sermons a conversational feel in the way he used the personal pronoun “you.” “And I went up into the bathroom, sat on the floor, and just cried myself dry” Lewis said, “Have *you* ever done that, *you’re* just crying and nothing; no more water?” (emphasis added). Table 18 indicates how often Lewis used those two words in each sermon.

When counting the frequency of these words, “right” and “you” in Lewis’ sermons, I read the context in which Lewis used the words to determine whether they functioned as a way to address the listeners in a conversational manner. If the word did not qualify it was deleted from the frequency count.

Table 18

*Number of Times “Right?” and “You” Were Used In
Each Sermon*

The sermons	“Right”	“You”
Sermon 1	6	12
Sermon 2	3	43
Sermon 3	9	50
Sermon 4	6	16
Sermon 5	13	37
Sermon 6	4	27
Sermon 7	14	30
Sermon 8	0	10
Sermon 9	6	41
Sermon 10	0	9
Sermon 11	0	9
Sermon 12	8	74
Sermon 13	1	77
Sermon 14	0	56
Sermon 15	0	65
Sermon 16	4	91
Totals	74	647

For example, I omitted “God answered me right away” from the count since he used the term “right” as an adverb rather than as a term to elicit a mental response from his listeners. For the same reasons, I omitted “you” from the count if he used it as a blanket statement to include all people in general and not just his listeners. For instance, in his sermon on faith, hope, and charity, he used “you” to refer to anyone, not just the audience: “Joseph Smith, in the *Lectures On Faith*, said that faith rested on three basic pillars. One, the idea that God existed. *You* could not have faith unless you had an idea or concept that God existed” (emphasis added). I excluded this example from the final count and others like it, simply because it refers to people in general and not merely his listeners.

When asked about his feelings toward making a sermon a lively, casual conversation Lewis said, “I like an informal conversational style. I don’t want distance—homey, friends, comfort—maybe that’s it. It should be comfortable. I do a better talk if I’m comfortable.” Though many teachers and preachers in the LDS culture wear a white shirt, tie, and suit coat, one of Lewis’ distinguishing characteristics is to lose the suit coat and merely dawn the white shirt and tie. To Lewis a coat says, “authority...and I don’t want an authority atmosphere.... I want a more casual comfort.” He went on to say, “Politicians do it all the time. You’ll see Obama out on the stump, coat off, white shirt sleeves rolled up. It says, ‘I’m comfortable.’ It’s relaxed.” Lewis felt that preachers should “never have anything between” them and the “audience” like a coat of authority, podium, or a table. “You can’t always keep that rule. But I don’t like to stand behind anything—a table, a podium.”

When asked about using the word “right,” Lewis concurred with my inference that he did use it as a way to elicit audience participation. “I wanted them to agree...not agree with me, but to think and say, ‘Well, yeah, I can see that.’ It’s a way of bringing them into it.”

Openness. Another subcategory that makes up idyllic style is the way in which preachers open themselves up emotionally for listeners. For preachers to open themselves to the congregation is a subcategory that is best described by the following characteristics (a) they disclose their feelings, (b) they share wants, needs, desires, worries, weaknesses, etc., (c) they avoid confessing sins or pleading for sympathy, and (d) they share defeats as well as triumphs, and doubt as well as faith. Table 19 indicates to what extent there was a presence of these characteristics in the 16 sermons.

Here is one example where Lewis displayed the first characteristic and appropriately disclosed intimate feelings. It comes from an experience he shared tracing his family history. He related how he found in Denmark the same church that his ancestors attended. Once inside, Lewis asked the minister about a certain door. “That’s

Table 19

Openness Characteristic

Preaching theory	Lewis’ practice (%)
1. Preachers disclose their feelings.	100
2. Preachers make themselves transparent by appropriately sharing worries, weaknesses, wants, and needs.	100
3. Preachers do not confess sins or plea for sympathy.	100
4. Preachers appropriately express defeats as well as triumphs, and doubt as well as faith.	100

the door to the bell tower,” the minister replied, “Would you like to see the bells?” Lewis stated,

And I began to weep. I said “My great-grandfather use to ring those bells.” He [the minister] said, “Well, you need to go up and ring them then.” He opened the door, and he took me up those same steps my ancestor walked [and I rang the bells].

In this example, he shared an emotional moment from his life, and opened himself up in a way that made him transparent to listeners. Like all the stories he shared, these stories did not feel inappropriate, too revealing, or overly emotional.

Lewis emulated the second characteristic in Table 18 in the way he appropriately disclosed his feelings of inadequacy. Here are two examples. “I’ve always said in my own life, if there is a reason to feel guilty I’ll find it...” Lewis noted, “I know how to find it. I’m very good at finding reasons...and it isn’t hard for me to find reasons that would qualify me saying, ‘Oh wretched man that I am.’” In the second example, after Lewis related the story of Peter walking on the water, he expressed to listeners how he felt when God seemed to ask him to “walk on water” or in other words, do the impossible. “There are times” Lewis responded, “when I think, ‘Lord you might as well ask me to walk on water as to do that because I don’t think I can do that.’” In both these examples, he showed his humanness yet avoided becoming the center of attention or turning the sermon into a confessional.

After reading to Lewis the characteristics of openness in preaching, he responded emphatically to its importance. “Amen, amen. I’m very comfortable doing that. I am as open as I can be.... I don’t think we tell them our specific sins or weaknesses. I’m not going to say, ‘Look, I really struggle with this particular thing,’ in most cases. But I will

say things like, ‘I can find guilt under every rock, can you?’” To Lewis, openness is empathic. It enables preachers to understand and enter into the hearts and minds of listeners. “I want them to feel that I understand what they think and what their lives are like because I’ve been through [it]; I think the same way, and I feel the same things.”

Image-laden words. This next subcategory refers to the way in which preachers speak out into vivid language that sketches images into listener’s minds—images that portray human experience (L. Hogan & Reid, 1999). This subcategory is marked by three characteristics: (a) the language is vivid, (b) the language has strong verbs and nouns, and (c) the language has strong adjectives and adverbs. The data indicate that there was a presence of these characteristics in all 16 sermons (see Table 20).

Here are two short examples of the first characteristic in Table 20 where Lewis used language that had the potential to paint images in listener’s minds. In the first example, Lewis used colorful words to describe a figurative staircase taken from his imagination—a staircase that represented humankind’s ascension from God’s temples to his celestial world. “It is beautiful, every step is a prism, and as the light shines down through it” Lewis noted, “it splits the light into rainbow colors that paint the clouds in the earth beneath it in a soft and beautiful glow.” With this description, Lewis

Table 20

Characteristics of Image-Laden Words

Preaching theory	Lewis’ practice (%)
1. The preacher’s language paints images into listener’s minds.	100
2. The preacher uses strong verbs and nouns that convey ideas.	100
3. Preacher uses strong adjectives and adverbs.	100

turned dull stair steps into light splitting “prisms” which burst “light into rainbow colors.”

In this second example, Lewis in an almost poetic way conveyed feelings of joy and glory while gazing into his wife’s eyes during their wedding ceremony. “I...looked into her eyes...[and] felt that God had opened the window of the celestial kingdom just a crack, and a single ray of celestial glory lit that alter where we knelt.” Lewis again burnished his language with vibrant and colorful words. These words had the potential to turn listener ears into eyes and evoke life-like images in their minds, images of celestial windows and golden shafts of light (C. Miller, 2006; Wiersbe, 1994).

Lewis employed the second characteristic in Table 20 in the way he used strong verbs and nouns. He sprinkled them throughout the 16 sermons. He used strong nouns and verbs to speak about “pillars” of truth, “rivers of truth,” hope as a “commodity,” desires that are “born,” and temples that “bathe the world” with their “healing water.” In one sermon, Lewis stated, “The human heart is like a vessel into which God pours the liquid light of his truth and mercy.” These concrete verbs and nouns have the capacity to evoke images—images that theorists say listeners can feel, touch, smell, and see (Craddock, 2001).

After discussing with Lewis how preaching theorists propose using vivid language, language that turns “listener’s ears into eyes,” he responded emphatically, “Oh boy.... I love that phrase!” While describing to Lewis the homiletic necessity for using vivid language, language that contains strong verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, and whether he agreed with that necessity, again he responded positively.

Yeah, absolutely, I like to paint pictures. I want them to see things. I’m a very image-oriented person myself. I say to people when we’re studying the

scriptures, ‘One of the best things to do in reading is to just see—see what you’re reading. Picture in your mind the stories the Savior gave.... “Can you see him?”’

Figurative language. Though there are over 200 figures of speech, only two emerge repeatedly in homiletic literature: metaphor and parallelism. For this reason, the use of metaphor and parallelism become the characteristics of this subcategory that are part of the preacher’s ideal style. Metaphor compares two separate things by asserting that one thing *is* the other thing: “That student *is* a clown!” Parallelism is a term that refers to a sentence in which the first half is grammatically symmetrical to the second half. For example, “My wife eats to live, and I live to eat.” As the reader can see by the data in Table 21, there was a presence of these two characteristics in 100% of the 16 sermons.

One instance in Lewis’ sermons that serves as a good example of utilizing metaphor, I took from a sermon where he teaches a concept from the Book of Judges in the Old Testament. He used the story of Gideon to teach that sometimes God’s children need encouragement in their beliefs, or as Lewis stated, they need a “fleece.” In the story of Gideon, God asks him to perform the seemingly impossible task of conquering an astronomical amount of Midianites with a relatively small handful of Israelites. To bolster his faith, God soaks Gideon’s fleece in the night with dew at Gideon’s request,

Table 21

Use of Metaphors and Parallelism

Preaching theory	Lewis’ practice (%)
1. The preacher employs metaphors.	100
2. The preacher employs parallelism.	100

but left the ground surrounding it dry. Then the next night, God kept the fleece dry but made the ground wet. “Now there is a difference between ‘sign seeking’ and ‘fleece asking,’” Lewis stated. “Sign seeking says ‘I am not going to do unless you give me the sign.’ When we ask for fleeces we want to do it, we intend to do it.... We just need encouragement.” Lewis will refer back to this “fleece” metaphor 13 more times in the remainder of the sermon to call listener attention back to the idea he conceptualized with a fleece.

As the data show, Lewis also employed parallelism in all 16 sermons. Following are two examples of Lewis using parallelism. In this first example, Lewis told listeners what God might say to people who struggle to accept what he gives them in life. “You know what you want” God says to believers, but “I know what you need.” “Help me understand and I will believe,” says the struggling Christian, but God says, “Believe, and I will help you understand.” In a second example, Lewis stated the following,

Here are my eyes, see the beauties of God’s house with them. Here are my hands, receive the gifts of eternity with them. Here are my ears, hear the promises of everlasting life with them. Here are my knees, kneel at alters...with them. Here is my tongue, make eternal covenants with them.

As the reader can see from the data and the examples, Lewis used metaphor to make intangible, abstract concepts more concrete, and parallelism to make them memorable and give them a sense of unity and form.

After reminding Lewis about the sermon where he used Gideon’s fleece as a metaphor he said the following,

I, if I can, want to package the principle so that once they know the story, and you’ve given them [the] phrase [“God will give you fleeces”], the whole lesson, the meaning of it is contained in the one thing: “fleeces.” Once they know what I

mean by fleeces—”God will give you fleeces”—they got it. They can carry it away. That’s easier than saying, “When you need confirmation for your prayers because you’re afraid to move forward, God will help to confirm [them].”

Lewis also explained that whenever he selected metaphors, he tried to take them word-for-word from the scriptures. “It’s better if I can pull out of the scriptures and it’s better if... it’s something that you can visualize in your mind.”

Simple words. This last subcategory of the data show to what extent Lewis used simple words. Theorists advise preachers to use the common, shared vocabulary of the congregation rather than polysyllabic, academic language. To measure the complexity of Lewis’ words, I measured their readability with Microsoft Word’s Flesch reading ease score (grade-level range, 0 to 12). I chose Microsoft Word to perform this test for two reasons. First, the test is relatively simple to administer. Second, Paasche-Orlow, Taylor, and Brancati (2003) and Stockmeyer (2009) asserted that Microsoft Word is a reliable and valid tool for calculating the readability of Word documents.

The Flesch reading ease score is based on a formula produced by Flesch (1948). The formula computes the score using the average number of syllables per 100 words (wl) and words per sentence (sl). The syllables per word measures word difficulty, and words per sentence measure syntactic complexity. The formula for calculating the reading ease (R.E.) score was:

$$\text{R.E.} = 206.835 - .846 \text{ wl} - 1.015 \text{ sl} \text{ (Flesch, 1948, p. 223)}$$

Since homiletic theory discourages complex, polysyllabic words, and this formula measures complexity in terms of syllables, this is an appropriate formula to measure the simplicity/complexity of Lewis’ language. The Flesch reading ease score ranges from 0

to 100. According to Stockmeyer (2009), 0 to 40 is very difficult to difficult reading. Eighty to 100 is considered easy reading. Stockmeyer stated that some states require insurance policies to receive a score of 40 and above. Flesch set the score for plain English at 60. Stockmeyer suggested reading scores for standard documents to fall somewhere between 60 and 70. The reader can see the results of Lewis score in the right-hand column in Table 22. According to Table 22, Lewis had a Flesch-reading-ease mean score of 73.05, which means the readability was 3.05 points easier than the standard.

Again, the ideal readability ranges from 60-70. Out of the 16 sermons, 38% fell in the ideal range, 31% were just 5 points above or below the ideal score. Thus, 69% of the 16 sermon scores were either ideal or they approximated the ideal by scoring 5 points

Table 22

Flesch Reading Ease Score of Lewis' Sermons

The sermons	Lewis' Flesch reading ease score
Sermon 1	72.3
Sermon 2	82.7
Sermon 3	78.2
Sermon 4	68.8
Sermon 5	79.9
Sermon 6	66.3
Sermon 7	61.2
Sermon 8	76.2
Sermon 9	79.1
Sermon 10	67.3
Sermon 11	72
Sermon 12	80.8
Sermon 13	74.9
Sermon 14	73.8
Sermon 15	68.7
Sermon 16	72
Mean score	73.05
Ideal scores	60-70

above or below the ideal range. Thus, the data indicate that Lewis spoke in the common, shared vocabulary of the congregation rather than polysyllabic, academic language in 69% of his sermons.

Summary. In summary, this portion of the analysis sought to understand to what extent Lewis' preaching style was congruent with theoretical style. The fundamental criteria on which Lewis was compared had five subcategories. The first subcategory related to his natural style. One characteristic of natural style is the ability to be genuine. I concluded that in 100% of Lewis sermons he sounded genuine and sincere. Another characteristic of a natural style is to be conversational. In all 16 sermons, Lewis used either the word "right" or "you" to facilitate a conversational type style. He used "right" as a question 74 times and "you" to address the audience personally 647 times.

The second subcategory for the ideal style is distinguished by openness. Not only did Lewis disclose his intimate feelings, weaknesses, triumphs, or successes in 100% of the sermons, but he also disclosed them appropriately. Comparing Lewis to the third subcategory of style—using image-laden words—I discovered that in 100 % of his sermons he employed picturesque words. Whether those words were strong verbs, nouns, adjectives, or adverbs, they had the capacity to paint images in listeners minds.

In the fourth subcategory, Lewis consistently exhibited core theory in the way he used metaphors and parallelism. Not only did he consistently use both rhetorical devices in all his sermons but he also used them frequently.

In the last component of style, Lewis's sermons were analyzed to discover to what extent he used simplistic words and phrases rather than polysyllabic, academic language.

Using the Flesch reading ease score, Lewis had a mean score of 73.05, which readability experts consider easy to read. The data indicate that in 69 % of his sermons, Lewis spoke in the common, shared vocabulary of the congregation rather than with polysyllabic, academic language.

Illustrations

Homiletic theorists encourage preachers to use illustrations that (a) are relevant, (b) match the truth they illustrate, (c) are appropriate and appropriately used, (d) are specific rather than general, and (e) begin and end properly. Rather than merely account for the presence of these subcategories and characteristics in Lewis's sermons, I counted the occurrence of them in all 161 illustrations of the 16 sermons. The latter analysis took more time, but it seemed more telling to assess all the illustrations for the desired subcategories and characteristics (Chapell, 2005a).

In the analysis process, it quickly became apparent that Lewis employed three kinds of illustrations. I classified his illustrations as scripture-centered, personal, or "other." For an illustration to qualify as scripture-centered, Lewis had to tell enough of it to present the story's plot. Merely referring to a verse of scripture to make a doctrinal statement did not qualify. For an illustration to qualify as a personal illustration it had to come from Lewis' personal life. To qualify as an "other" illustration, it had to be an object lesson, fictional story, historical story, hypothetical situation, fable, or parable (a parable created by Lewis). Table 23 lists the percentage of illustrations that fell into the three classes.

Table 23

Illustrations That Were Scripture Centered, Personal, or “Other”

Scripture-centered	Personal	Other
34%	46%	19%

Since Lewis employed three different classes of illustrations, I present the data according to those three classes. In this way, the reader can make a side-by-side comparative analysis between the three kinds.

Some illustrations were excluded in certain portions of the analysis because the characteristic which was measured did not apply to that class of illustration. For example, one characteristic counsels preachers to avoid using personal stories to make themselves the center of attention. Since 56% of Lewis illustrations were not personal stories (e.g., scripture-centered and “other”) they were excluded from that portion of the analysis.

Illustrations are made relevant by isolating human features. Whatever kind of illustration preachers employ, they should isolate their human features. A human feature refers to the situations and emotions that listeners face in their lives. According to Table 24, the data indicate that all of Lewis’ scripture-centered and personal illustrations isolate human features.

In one instance where Lewis disclosed human features, he taught listeners that if their walk with God required them to perform a seemingly impossible task, then along with that task God would give the encouragement to accomplish it. The illustration comes from a biblical story where a father petitioned Jesus’ apostles to heal his son. They try but

Table 24

Relevant and Isolate Human Features

Preaching theory	Scripture-centered	Personal	Other
Illustrations are made relevant by isolating human features.	100%	100%	93%

fail. “Now he [the father] has had a blow to his faith. Right? He had asked the disciples and they couldn’t perform the necessary healing and so he comes to the Savior in desperation.” Lewis then read from the Bible, “If thou canst believe all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightaway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Then Lewis targeted the human feature listeners find relevant. “Have you ever cried out that way? ‘I believe!’” Lewis asked, “I know what you want me to do [Lord]. I want to do it, but it just seems so hard, so impossible. I believe! Help my unbelief!... I need something to encourage my belief.” The desperate man’s cry was the human feature Lewis targeted and to which listeners could relate. Though it was only one man’s cry, it was everyone’s cry, at least everyone in Lewis’ audience that had the desire but not the capacity to trust in the Lord.

In the interview, I expressed to Lewis that some homiletic theorists discourage using historical stories unless the preacher makes them relevant by isolating the human elements. He responded, “Well, if the story from the past has meaning today, if it’s an inspiration, yeah.... It has to mean something” he said. I inferred from his response that the “human elements” of a story that preachers should target are those that have the most meaning and inspiration for listeners. So the kind of story one tells (whether historical or

nonhistorical) is not as important as the meaning and the inspiration it brings to listeners.

Illustrations match the truth they illustrate. To evaluate the extent to which Lewis' illustrations clarify the point that he makes, I compared his 161 illustrations to the ideas he connected them. If there was a strong relationship between the illustration and the idea it clarified, then that illustration qualified as representing theory. Table 25 indicates what percentage of the 161 illustrations matched the truth they illustrated.

One can get a sense of the precise manner in which Lewis' illustrations clarified or supported the point he made by an illustration he used to teach the idea that no task is too great if God commands it. The story took listeners back to his childhood working on his uncle Merlin's farm. His Uncle Merlin gave him his first driving lesson, placed him on his first horse, taught him his first lesson on stacking hay, and let him drive his first team of horses down a canyon.

He always assumed that we could do whatever he asked us to do. It didn't matter how impossible it seemed to us or how difficult it seemed to us. The assumption was if Uncle Merlin asked me to do that I could do it.

Lewis then taught that like his Uncle Merlin, if "God asks me to do it, I can do it even though it may appear to be impossible." In this example, there was a clear connection between the illustration and the idea it clarified. God's expectations were like his uncle's; they were achievable. In almost all of the illustrations, like this former example, there

Table 25

Match the Truth They Illustrate

Preaching theory	Scripture-centered	Personal	Other
There exists a clear analogy between the illustration in the sermon and the idea it illustrates.	95%	97%	87%

was as clear analogy between the illustrations and the points they elucidated.

Illustrations are appropriate and used appropriately. This subcategory focused upon the nature of the illustrations Lewis used and the manner in which he used them. I compared him to seven characteristics within this subcategory. The data results in Table 26 indicate Lewis' practice consistently embodied theory with this subcategory.

There was a presence of all the characteristics in Table 26 except characteristic two, which tells preachers to avoid stories that speak of blood, birthing, bedrooms, and bathrooms. Lewis shared an experience from his childhood where he fractured his jaw and it bled. Though the story lowered his percentage with this characteristic, it was, however, a rather innocuous reference to blood.

The fourth characteristic reminds preachers to avoid making themselves the center of attention. It was not certain whether Lewis intentionally employed this strategy,

Table 26

Appropriate and Used Appropriately

Preaching theory	Scripture-centered (%)	Personal (%)	Other (%)
1. Illustrations are free of violence.	100	100	100
2. Illustrations are free of incidents related to birthing, blood, bedrooms, bathrooms, and gore.	100	99	100
3. Preacher informs the audience if the illustration is fictional.	100	100	100
4. The preacher does not use personal stories to make him/her the center of attention.	100	100	100
5. If good results from the preacher's actions, then he or she gives credit to God.	NA	100	NA
6. The preacher does not make an exhibition out of his or her weaknesses.	100	100	100
7. The preacher does not turn the sermon into a confessional or divulge personal sins.	100	100	100

nevertheless, he deflected listener attention by excluding details about himself, details that could have sensationalized his stories. For example, in the middle of a personal story he diverted attention from himself back to the listeners by transitioning from first to second person pronouns. After later doubting an answer the Lord gave him in prayer, he thumbed through the scriptures playing scripture “roulette” hoping they would fall open to an answer from God:

I picked up the Bible...and I said, “Lord, I need a fleece. I need to know this is really what...you want me to do.... And I did kind of a silly thing. We all do this. I know you have all done it too. You pick up your scriptures and you open them and you anticipate that the answer is going to be right there where you open them. It’s kind of like saying Father in Heaven give me an answer right now and we open them up.

Lewis went from how he did a silly thing to “we all” do this silly thing. The change of pronouns deflected attention from him back to his listeners. This helped listeners reflect on their own lives rather than focus on Lewis’.

The fifth characteristic suggests that preachers give credit to God when good results from their actions. Out of 161 illustrations, Lewis shared ten that indicated how his actions brought about good in someone’s life. Therefore, the percentage in Table 26 comes from 10 illustrations rather than 161. In all 10 illustrations, Lewis diverted attention from himself to God. Here is a case in point: “One of my children comes...and she says, ‘Daddy, I want to play Candy Land. Now I’ve played enough Candy Land to cover the freeway with those little colored cards..’” Lewis remarked, “so maybe I brushed my child off.” [pause] And then the Spirit begins [sic] to whisper.... ‘Suffer little children to come to me for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ So I turn the TV off and pulled out the Candy Land board.” Lewis said he finally chose to play with his daughter, but he also

told listeners it was not his noble character that inspired him to play, but God’s divine nudging.

Illustrations are specific rather than general. “Specific” refers to the kinds of words preachers select to illustrate an idea. As discussed earlier, homileticians suggest using descriptive words. Imagery invites listeners to sense the preacher’s experience.

There are three characteristics that qualify an illustration as specific rather than general:

(a) the preacher must use descriptive, expressive, and concrete words when telling the illustration, (b) the preacher must apply characterization strategies to portray the illustration’s characters in universal terms that listeners understand, and (c) the preacher must use dialogue to make characters more lifelike.

As the reader can note from Table 27, Lewis applied the first characteristic and used concrete words more often in his personal and “other” illustrations than he did in scripture-centered illustrations. For example, he says “As Narnia is being destroyed, a great wall of water floods all the land of Narnia,” and “the great, giant [Father] Time reaches up and grabs the Sun and squeezes it like an orange and all light goes out.” In this example, Lewis turned ears into eyes with words like “squeezes,” and “orange.”

Table 27

Specific Rather Than General

Preaching theory	Scripture-centered (%)	Personal (%)	Other (%)
1. Preacher uses descriptive, expressive, concrete words.	53%	92%	100%
2. Preacher uses characterization strategies to portray character in universal terms listeners understand.	47%	74%	89%
3. Preacher uses dialogue to make characters more lifelike.	82%	86%	96%

After explaining to Lewis how theorists recommend using descriptive concrete words when telling stories, Lewis concurred that this characteristic is essential to good story telling. “Put people in the setting...so they’re living it, they’re seeing it, they’re with you.... Whether it’s history, whether it’s a story of my family, they need to be there.”

Lewis used characterization strategies less in his scripture-centered illustrations than he did in the personal and “other.” Again, characterization in homiletics refers to how a preacher portrays a story’s characters in universal terms that everyone knows. For example, to say, “He was built like Barney Fife” is more descriptive than to say, “He was skinny.”

One example where Lewis did use characterization strategies comes from a sermon where he taught listeners about the nature of God. Lewis explained how Jesus waited until the “fourth watch” of the night (3:00-6:00 a.m.) before he approached his disciples struggling in a boat during a storm. Lewis taught that sometimes God does the same thing spiritually to his children today: he waits until the “fourth watch” of their lives before he answers their prayers. “We worship a ‘fourth-watch’ God. Somehow, the Lord feels it is good for us to toil in rowing against the wind.” He went on to say, “Now that creates a problem, for me anyway, I’m a ‘First-watch’ person.... When the wind comes..., I get a little tired. There is a blessing I want that is not there.” Lewis continued, “Lord I’m a First-watch person, and he often answers, ‘I’m a Fourth-watch God.’” In this example, Lewis condensed a deep concept about God’s nature and his timing into three short words, “Fourth-watch God.” With those three simple yet descriptive words, he went on to teach that sometimes, God calms the storms of life. Other times, he lets the storm

rage and he calms the child.

The third characteristic focuses on how preachers use dialogue to make characters more lifelike. Lewis often used dialogue to share with listeners his mental conversations with God. Before sharing these conversations, he often told listeners these dialogues were merely hypothetical situations he imagined in his mind. He called them “ponderings.” Some of the ponderings were real conversations he experienced with God during personal prayer or meditation upon the scriptures. One example he shared came from an imagined interview with Christ. “I knew that this was a judgment of some sort, and the Savior came in and he sat in one of those chairs” Lewis remembered, “and he beckoned to me to sit next to him in the other chair. And so I sat down in the other chair, and I knew without him saying a word to me that I was to be judged.”

And he turned to me and he asked the first question and this was the question, he said, “Lewis, did you proclaim the Gospel?” And knowing what my attitude just was [sic] in the plane, I thought, “Oh no! I’m in real trouble” [laughter]. But I looked back at him and I said.... “Lord, I tried,” and he said, “Let’s see.” And it was like...a scene in midair opened between the two of us.... We were sitting together watching this scene and the scene kept changing. And he began to show me the scenes of my life where I had made an effort to proclaim the gospel.... “So Lewis, did you proclaim the Gospel?” I wasn’t still quite sure how I was supposed to answer the question after what I’d seen. And so very tentatively and with great hesitation, I said, “Yes?” [laughter]; and as soon as I said that “Yes?” into my mind flooded all my failures. And I said to him, “Lord, but what about all my failures,” and he said, “Tell me your failures.” And so I told him, all the times that I should’ve done [sic] on the airplane and then I should of worked a little harder as stake missionary...and he listened very patiently and when I was done he turned to me, and He said, “I don’t remember that,” and then he smiled. Now what was born in my heart? Hope!

In this lifelike conversation with God, Lewis used dialogue to help listeners experience a God that was personal, intimate, caring and close enough to join them in conversation at their kitchen table.

After sharing with Lewis examples of his conversations with God, he responded that he was aware of using that strategy. He called it the “Tevye relationship with God.” Lewis was referring to Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, a character who has an ongoing dialogue with God about his conflicts between tradition and beliefs.

Illustrations begin and end properly. To begin an illustration, theorists suggest that preachers began at the point of the story’s action and tension rather than chronologically. When preachers begin chronologically, often they bog listeners deep into pointless details before they get to the heart of the story. Beginning with the action arrests attention, and once preachers accomplish this objective, then they can go back and orientate listeners in time and space with further details. Though it is important to begin with the story’s action, preachers should also orientate listeners briefly about where and when the story takes place. Moreover, to end an illustration, theorists suggest that at some point in the sermon, preachers bring closure to the problem that was presented earlier in the illustration. Finally, theorists suggest that when ending an illustration, preachers never divulge the ending too soon. As Table 28 shows, the data indicate that out of 161 illustrations, many of them had a presence of these characteristics.

By comparing Lewis’ 161 illustrations to the characteristics requisite for beginning an effective illustration, I discovered that Lewis consistently orientated his listeners in time and space yet he quickly took listeners to the heart of the story. Here are two examples taken from the beginning of two illustrations. Note how in this first example, the first sentence orientated listeners and the second sentence presented the issue he addressed. “I remember talking with a brother who was leaving his wife for

Table 28

Possessed a Proper Beginning and Ending

Preaching theory	Scripture-centered (%)	Personal (%)	Other (%)
1. The story begins at the point of the story's action/tension not chronologically.	96	88	96
2. The preacher orientates listeners in time and space.	96	100	96
3. Illustrations bring closure to the problem presented in the story.	89	96	96
4. Preacher does not reveal the end of the story too soon.	89	99	100

many years—the mother of his children—for a younger prettier woman. And I said to him ‘You know you are losing them both....’

In this second example, Lewis orientated with the first and second sentence, then he plunged listeners into the action in the third sentence.

I was as speaking in Boise to a group of sisters and there was a question-and-answer period, and Sheri Rain was one of the other speakers. She was doing a question-and answer. And one of the other sisters raised her hand and asked this question—and I’m paraphrasing somewhat—she said, “Why did my life not turn out the way I wanted it to turn out?”

As one can see from the data in Table 28, Lewis also scored relatively high in the way he ended his illustrations. Theorists suggest that an effective ending will not only uncover a hidden truth, but will also bring closure to the problem presented in the story. Lewis did this consistently with most of his illustrations.

Summary. Out of 161 illustrations, 34% were scripture-centered, 46% personal, and 19% were “other.” Since there were 16 subcategories and characteristics assessed in the scripture-centered, personal, and “other” illustrations, there was 46 total percentages that were assessed (not counting the two that were disqualified). Of those 46, thirty-six

fell in the 92% to 100% range. Seven dropped in the 82% to 89% range, and the remaining three came between 47% to 74%.

In the first subcategory, 100% of the scripture-centered and personal illustrations, and 93% of the “other” illustrations were found relevant. In the second subcategory, 95% of the scripture centered, 97% of personal, and 87% of the “other” illustrations matched the truth they illustrated. In the third subcategory, 100% of scripture-centered, 99% of personal, and 100% of other illustrations were appropriate and appropriately used.

With the fourth subcategory, Lewis’ percentages varied the most ranging from 47% to 100%. This subcategory assessed to what extent his illustrations were concrete rather than general. The data show that only 53% of his scripture-centered illustrations had concrete words verse 92% of his personal, and 100% in “other.” Data also show that only 47% of scripture-centered illustrations were told using characterization strategies, 74% personal, and 89% “other.” And using the last subcategory to assess the extent to which he ended and began his illustrations his scores ranged between 88% and 100%.

Delivery

Robinson (2001) asserted that how preachers deliver a sermon is often just as important as what they deliver. *Delivery* is another category of the homiletic nomenclature that refers to the characteristic manner in which preachers present themselves and their message (Broadus, 1897/2005; Chapell, 2005a). Ideal delivery consists of five subcategories: (a) gesture, (b) body movement, (c) eye contact, (d) voice, and (e) emotional appeal. Because gestures and eye contact must be observed rather than heard, this category required analysis of five additional video-recorded sermons in

addition to the 16 audio sermons.

Body movement is a subcategory of delivery that refers to how and when preachers move on stage if they lack a pulpit. Since where Lewis preached in the five video sermons did not have a stage and there was very little room for him to move about, this subcategory did not apply to his preaching. Body movement was listed to merely show the reader that it is important to assess it if the preacher lacks a pulpit and if there is inadequate space to move on stage.

Gesture. This first subcategory describes the characteristic manner in which a preacher uses facial expressions, hand expressions, a shrug of the shoulders, or any other upper body movement to communicate (Harris, 2004; Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922).

According to homiletic theory, there are two characteristics that comprise this subcategory: (a) the preacher gestures naturally rather than nervously, and (b) the preacher gestures appropriately (e.g., without pulpit pounding or pointing fingers). My observations revealed a presence of both characteristics in the five video sermons (see Table 29).

The first characteristic refers to the way in which a preacher gestures naturally without nervously gripping pulpit horns, jingling pocket change, twisting wedding rings, or performing any other nervous reflex (Chapell, 2005a; Robinson, 2001). Not only did Lewis' gesture naturally, but he did it frequently. He gestured mostly with his arms and hands and second with his face.

Lewis gestured often with his free hand while holding scriptures in the other. When his hand and arm did move they usually moved to emphasize words, phrases, or

Table 29

Characteristics of Gesture

Preaching theory	Lewis' practice (%)
1. The preacher gestures naturally rather than nervously.	100
2. The preacher avoids inappropriate gestures (pounding pulpit, pointing fingers).	100

ideas. Usually his hand moved in syncopation with the rhythm of his words and phrases. Sometimes his arm and hand moved in a smooth, fluid motion, and other times it moved more rapidly up and down, or back and forth. He extended his fingers, poked the air, rubbed his chin, scratched his head, waved his hand, flattened his palm, curled his fist, pinched the air, and even pointed to heaven occasionally. Lewis' arm and hand movements became the most pronounced when he emphasized important words or ideas. For example, in one sermon, he wanted to emphasize to listeners that "we don't just have faith in the Savior...[we have faith in his] *patience, gentleness, kindness, compassion, [and] willingness to forgive.*" At the beginning of each adjective, Lewis' arm and hand made a tomahawk chop in the air to emphasize that characteristic of Christ. Sometimes he just gave emphasis to one word. For example, to emphasize the spiritual might of a prophet, as he stated "powerful" to describe the prophet's character, Lewis gave another tomahawk chop with his arm and hand. When he made chopping motions, rather than clench his hand in a fist, he opened his palm with his fingers extended, which seemed friendlier than if he had made a fist.

Lewis also had a variety of facial expressions but they were not as pronounced as his hands. He used more facial expressions when he told personal stories and especially when he related humorous incidents in his life. Some facial expressions he used seem to

convey happiness, surprise, curiosity, and sadness.

The second subcategory of proper gesticulation describes how a preacher should avoid inappropriate expressions like pounding the pulpit or pointing the fingers scornfully. Because Lewis did not use a pulpit in these five videos, it was impossible to observe whether he would have pounded it. I could, however, observe him gesturing with his fingers. It was noted that he sometimes pointed his fingers but it was never to scorn, warn, reprimand, or admonish. Rather, he pointed his finger to indicate a location, or signal to listeners to respond to his question, and he kept his hand open in a benign manner.

In the interview with Lewis, before I explained to him the frequency to which he used his free hand to gesture, as soon as I mentioned gesturing as the next topic of our discussion, he made a point to express that he gestured often. “I don’t do it consciously,” he said, but “I do a lot.” This helped confirm that I evaluated his gestures correctly. He also confirmed the inference made earlier that his gesturing was purposeful. He said it was to “give emphasis” and it “draws people in. As mentioned earlier, his gestures could not be assessed in the 16 audio sermons given behind a pulpit, but he did mention he gestured less behind a pulpit than he did in front of one.

I probably do it less in a pulpit and if it’s being [video] taped. Sometimes I think I can’t be all over, so I’ll either put them [hands] down or I’ll grab—I’ll do something to try and remind myself I can’t wave my hands...[but] it’s hard for me not to gesture when I talk.

He was also asked if he holds his scriptures at the pulpit in the same manner he did when he stood before the listeners in the five video recorded sermons. “When I’m at the pulpit, I just lay them down” he responded.

Eye contact. Another subcategory that comprises ideal delivery is eye contact (Chapell, 2005a; C. Miller, 2006; Robinson, 2001). This subcategory has two characteristics: (a) the preacher's eyes should pan across the congregation and occasionally rest on different listeners, and (b) the preacher's eyes focus on listeners not notes. By observing the five video recordings, it was discovered that there was a presence of these two characteristics in all five sermons (see Table 30).

Lewis demonstrated the first characteristic of ideal eye contact by the way in which he turned his head left and right to view his listeners. After panning back and forth across the congregation, he stopped movement briefly to focus on different listeners. Then he turned his head again to repeat the motion. He normally turned about 30 degrees to the left, then 15 degrees to the right, with an occasional 40 degree turn to meet the gaze of listeners to the far left and right. It was noted that he favored looking forward to the left a little more than to the right.

With the second characteristic, Lewis focused on the listeners rather than notes in all five sermons. In fact, Lewis never used notes. His eyes were always fixed on listeners except when he read from his scriptures. In several places during the interview, Lewis expressed his dislike of notes because they take his eyes off listeners. "I want to always

Table 30

Characteristics of Proper Eye Contact

Preaching theory	Lewis' practice (%)
1. The preacher's eyes pan across the congregation and occasionally rest on different listeners.	100
2. The preacher's eyes focus on listeners not notes.	100

be looking at the” listeners he said, “I don’t want them to be looking at me and I’m looking [at] my outline or I’m looking at my keyboard.” He did say that occasionally “if there’s a sentence that I want to say just right, I’ll write that sentence out. But I don’t write notes.”

When asked how he remembers what to say, he responded, “It’s either in my brain or it’s in the scriptures.” He showed how he marked his scriptures so that notes were unnecessary. With an architect’s template, he placed triangles at different locations to remind him of each point he wanted to make. Those triangles pointed to words and phrases that represented the concepts he wanted to teach. Between his scripture markings, and the outline in his head, both worked jointly to help him keep his direction and bearings during his sermons. “I know where I’m going...if I don’t know where I’m going—if I don’t have a map, then I’m not comfortable.” The map, however, has to be in his mind as well as the scriptures: “If it’s not in my mind, it’s not gonna work.”

Voice. Like eye contact, *voice* functions as another important subcategory in the preacher’s delivery (Chapell, 1989). Within this subcategory, there are six characteristics that comprise appropriate voice. Preachers (a) avoid a monotone voice, (b) say things as though they mean them, (c) regulate their volume according to the distance of the farthest listener, (d) vary their voice to bring emphasis to points, (e) vary the pacing of the words they speak, and (f) pause at crucial words, phrases, and concepts. By listening to the 16 sermons, and observing the five video-recorded sermons, I found a presence of these characteristics in 100% of these sermons (see Table 31).

The first characteristic of this subcategory described the ideal voice as one that.

Table 31

Characteristics of Proper Voice

Preaching theory	16 audio sermons (%)	5 video sermons (%)
1. The voice moves up and down the note scale rather than settling into a single, monotone note.	100	100
2. The preacher say things as though he or she means them.	100	100
3. The preacher regulates his or her volume according to the distance of the farthest listener.	100	100
4. The preacher varies his or her voice to bring emphasis to points.	100	100
5. The preacher varies the pacing of the words he or she speaks.	100	100
6. The preacher pauses at crucial words, phrases, and concepts.	100	100

has pitch, or rather, moves up and down the note scale rather than plateaus on a single note (2001). Lewis varied his voice throughout each sermon. With the second characteristic, theorists counsel preachers to say things as though they mean them (Broadus, 1897/2005; Chapell, 1989, 2005a; Reu & Steinhäuser, 1922; Robinson, 2001)

In other words, whether they speak of sorrow, joy, misery, or peace they should use a pitch that reflects that feeling or idea they want to emphasize. As the researcher, I sensed this characteristic throughout all of Lewis' sermons. When he spoke of joy his words, his voice, his tone, his attitude felt joyful, hopeful, and happy. When he spoke of sorrow his words and voice seemed sober and somber. It was just what one would expect of anyone that spoke of joy or sorrow.

The third characteristic of ideal voice describes the way that preachers regulate their volume according to the distance of the farthest listener. Since Lewis spoke at a microphone, it was assumed that the sound system used for these 16 sermons regulated

his volume for him. His voice was certainly adequately loud enough on the published CDs. It was noted in the five video recorded sermons, that a few times when he had to leave the microphone to display an object lesson, he elevated his voice to compensate for the loss the of the microphone. The increased volume seemed adequate enough to reach the back of a standard sized LDS chapel.

Varying the voice to bring emphasis to words, phrases, and ideas is the fourth characteristic that preaching theorists recommend for ideal voice (Robinson, 2001). When preachers vary their volume from either a louder tone, or a whisper, they can draw attention to specific words, phrases, ideas, or feelings. There was a presence of this characteristic in 100% of the 16 sermons. An example of this characteristic can be seen in one sermon where Lewis said what he thought God would say to listeners if God invited them into his holy temple. “*Come home.... Sit by my hearth and listen to my truths. Feast at my table. Be warmed by the love of your Eternal Father*” (emphasis added). At the beginning of each verb, Lewis’ elevated his voice to emphasize each action God would desire his children to make.

The fifth characteristic of ideal voice describes how preachers vary the rate at which they speak their words (Chapell, 2005a; Robinson, 2001). Sometimes preachers accelerate their words and sometimes they slow them to a skidding halt to accentuate a point of excitement, interest, or importance (Sunukjian, 2007). As the reader can see in Table 30, there was a presence of this subcategory in all 16 sermons. I learned that Lewis accelerated his voice when relating facts that were merely important to understanding the context of a story or concept. His rate of words became slower when he came to

significant words or phrases. For example, one sermon taught listeners how to build an “unshakable” testimony of Christ. Every time Lewis came to words and phrases related to building or tearing down a testimony (e.g., “shake,” “shaken,” “shaking,” “faith shaking,” or “shakes”) he slowed the rate at which he spoke. As he said these key words, he elongated the vowel and the “s” consonant of each word and phrase to give emphasis.

The last characteristic of ideal voice describes how preachers pause at crucial words, phrases, and concepts (Robinson, 2001). Pauses are the major punctuation marks of an oral sermon. As one can see from Table 30, there was a presence of this characteristic in 100% of the 16 sermons. Lewis often paused just before he introduced a new subject, when he gave a list of terms or ideas, while waiting for people to turn to their scriptures, or right after he gave a definition. For example, he asked, “What is a ‘seer?’” then he gave the definition. “A seer is a ‘see-er’...he can see things that are past... things in the future, things which are to come” Lewis said. After stating that definition, Lewis then paused again.

Lewis expressed how he tries to speak in the tone that suits the idea or feeling he is preaching. For example, he said, “If it’s tender—if it’s the Savior talking to Mary—I will try and put the tone” so that it matches the message and the moment. “Sometimes I will say to classes, ‘I’m not sure I can read this, that I can get the *tone* right.’ The tone’s important in the scriptures and I try to get the tone right.”

Emotional appeal. Emotional appeal is the subcategory of delivery, which asserts that preachers need to appropriately stir emotions, feelings, and passions in their listeners if they are to deliver a sermon well (Chapell, 2005a; Davis, 1958; Lloyd-Jones, 1971;

Robinson, 2001; P. Wilson, 1995b). According to homiletic theory, the most effective way preachers appropriately stir emotions, feelings, and passions in listeners is to (a) express genuine and sincere emotion, and (b) tether reason alongside passion. There was a presence of these subcategories in 100% of the audio and video sermons (see Table 32).

With the first characteristic, P. Wilson (1995b) asserted that preachers do not necessarily need a strategy to evoke emotion in listeners as much as they need a strategy to exhibit authentic emotions in themselves. By “authentic,” he meant emotion that is genuine and sincere (Chapell, 2005a). As the reader can see from Table 32, there was a presence of this characteristic in 100% of the audio and video sermons. There are a few factors that helped me sense Lewis was authentic and sincere. For one, there was simplicity in his words when he shared his feelings. Simplicity is often associated with sincerity because genuine is often opposed to sophistication (Richards, 2004). Lewis did not try to be sophisticated and use long words as he shared feelings; he just tried to be clear. If he became emotional, he did not become overly sentimental, he merely spoke openly, candidly in a way that felt genuine. There was fidelity between his words, tone of voice, gestures, and the emotions he expressed.

Table 32

Characteristics of Emotional Appeal

Preaching theory	16 audio sermons (%)	5 video sermons (%)
1. The preacher expresses genuine and sincere emotion.	100	100
2. The preacher tethers reason alongside passion.	100	100

The last characteristic suggests that preachers join reason with their passion. Lewis continually used reasonable, logical arguments to support his assertions. Even when he expressed ideas with feeling, along with those feelings, he tethered a logical and often profound argument or principle.

I read to Lewis how homiletic theorists suggest that preachers appropriately stir emotions, feelings, and passions in their listeners (Chapell, 2005a; Davis, 1958; Lloyd-Jones, 1971; Robinson, 2001; P. Wilson, 1995b). Lewis was cautious with this subcategory.

A good teacher *may* do it, but don't *try* and do it...if you try to do it, to illicit emotional response from your audience, if that becomes your goal...we're going to find ourselves trying to manipulate the Spirit...so I don't aim for emotional response in people. I aim to teach the truth, teach the story, teach the relevancy, and then let the Spirit do what the Spirit's going to do.

After Lewis made that response, I asked him if I represented him correctly by saying he never became overly sentimental or emotional he just said what he felt. "Yeah, that's true. That's exactly how I feel. I'm not after an emotional response." He went on to explain that the sermon must speak to the heart as well as the mind, but "usually, if you can call the mind to reflection, you'll engage the heart in feeling."

Summary. In summary, ideal delivery in a sermon consists of five subcategories: (a) gesture, (b) body movement, (c) eye contact, (d) voice, and (e) emotional appeal. With the first subcategory, gestures, there was a presence of its related characteristics in 100% of the five video-recorded sermons. Lewis gestured frequently with his freehand in a very natural way to emphasize words, phrases, and ideas.

The second subcategory focuses on body movement but this subcategory could

not be analyzed.

With the third subcategory there was a presence in 100% of the five video-recorded sermons of Lewis' eyes panning across listeners and resting them on different listeners. He also showed the second characteristics in the five sermons in the way he continually focused on listeners rather than notes.

The fourth subcategory of proper delivery focuses on the preacher's voice which consists of the following characteristics: (a) the preacher avoids a monotone voice, (b) the preacher says things as though he or she means them, (c) the preacher regulates his or her volume according to the distance of the farthest listener, (d) the preacher varies his or her voice to bring emphasis to points, (e) the preacher varies the pacing of the words he or she speaks, and (f) the preacher pauses at crucial words, phrases, and concepts. Using all of these characteristics as a criterion for which to compare Lewis, it was learned that there was a presence of them in 100% of the 16 audio and five video-recorded sermons.

The last subcategory comprising the ideal delivery is emotional appeal. Emotional appeal is made up of the following characteristics: (a) the preacher expresses genuine and sincere emotion, and (b) the preacher yokes passion alongside reason. There was a presence of these subcategories in 100% of these sermons (see Table 32). I sensed that Lewis's emotions were genuine and sincere. It was his plain spoken, simple, unembellished language, the tone of his voice that made his expressions of emotion feel real and genuine. And last, there was a presence of Lewis placing logical arguments alongside emotional appeal. These arguments were sound and reasonable.

As I ferreted through the sermons using the inductive method, I did not find any

strategies, methods, or techniques unlike those mentioned in homiletics. Thus, the primary method of data analysis merely found that his delivery was congruent with theory.

Inductive Method

Unlike the deductive method above where I compared Lewis' practice to the theoretical rubric, with this second method I worked inductively to find strategies used by Lewis that were unaccounted for in theory. This method required me to analyze integral pieces and parts of the 16 audio-recorded and five video-recorded sermons. Lewis did not use specific strategies unlike those stated in the literature. However, he did have a personal homiletic philosophy—one where relevancy functioned as a kind of a nucleus. Relevancy governed and influenced most everything Lewis did and said in his preaching. The other categories of ideal preaching were important to him but not as important as relevance. If one were to make a conceptual model that represented his perception of ideal preaching, all the other categories would orbit around relevancy (see Figure 10).

Homiletic theorists speak of the need for relevancy, but did not seem to place it at the center of their homiletic models as Lewis did. Veerman, in Larson and Robinson's (2005) *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, centered his chapter on relevancy, but it is unclear whether he would put relevancy at the center of a conceptual model if he made one.

Secondary Data Analysis

Whereas the primary procedure of analysis used an inductive and deductive

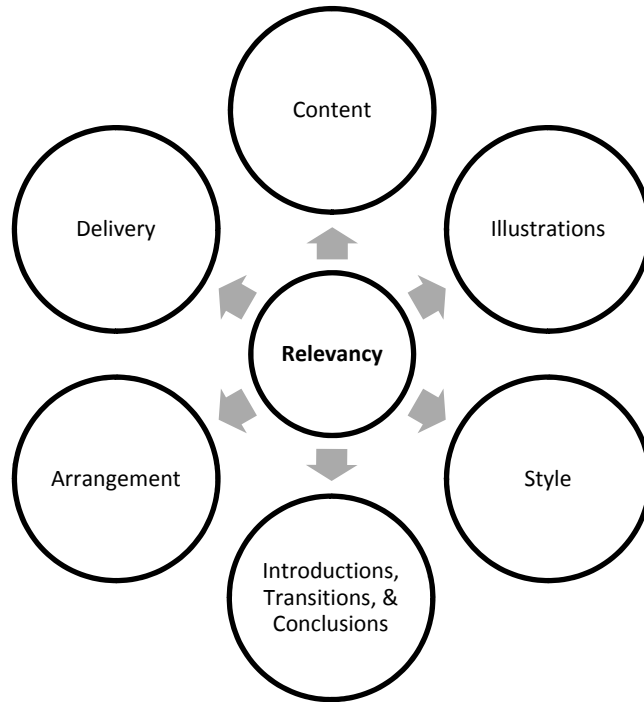


Figure 10. Lewis' personal homiletic model.

method to analyze the 16 audio-recorded and five video-recorded sermons, this secondary procedure used only the inductive method to analyze secondary sources. These secondary sources included three audio sermons, 13 books, 52 video-recorded mini sermons, 11 articles, and three artifacts. Rather than discover if Lewis' practice was congruent with theory, the main purpose of this secondary procedure was to discover if Lewis employed strategies different than those espoused in theory. Lewis did not use a specific strategy method, or technique unlike those mentioned in theory, however, relevancy was an integral part of all his sermons.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

To assist the reader, this concluding chapter restates the research problem, reviews the methodology, discusses the findings by homiletic category, states some final conclusions, then offers a few suggestions for future research. As mentioned in Chapter I, if preaching practice is to validate and refine homiletic theory so that it can in turn improve instruction in other affective domains, researchers must do what Warner (1977) did among the Chesapeake bay waterman and immerse themselves in practice. Then they can have a richer understanding of the theories that guide that practice. That is precisely what this research has done. As the researcher, I have immersed myself in a preacher's practice.

By comparing Lewis' practice to homiletic theory, I sought for discrepancies between what theory suggests and what Lewis practiced. If he practiced what theory suggested, then the research would validate that preachers do practice what the homiletic theorists prescribe. If the preacher, however, employed unique strategies—strategies unlike those found in homiletic theory—then his practice could inform theory. The general question this empirical research sought to answer is this: How does the practice of a preacher possessing broad appeal among listeners fit within the theoretical models coming from seminal writers in homiletic theory? More specifically,

1. Which strategies, methods, and techniques does the practitioner use that *are* accounted for in theory?
2. What kind of strategies, methods, and techniques does the practitioner use that

are not accounted for in theory.

As noted in Chapter II, this research is a case study of an expert preacher that has broad appeal among LDS listeners. I chose the case study method because it was the best tool to analyze the particularity and complexity of phenomena within this single case (Gall et al., 2003; Stake, 1995). Lewis was chosen because he was an extreme case manifesting unusual expertise in homiletics, he published, was accessible, and had broad appeal among listeners. This case study relied primarily on Lewis' published sermons, writings, and five interviews. The entire research covered a period of almost three years.

To discover whether Lewis' practice was congruent with theory, I employed a primary procedure for analysis on a primary data source, and employed a secondary procedure on a secondary data source. The primary procedure comprised both deductive and inductive research methods and relied on 16 audio-recorded and 5 video-recorded sermons as the primary source of data. With the deductive method, a rubric was created from the literature review which represented ideal theory. Lewis' practice was compared to the theoretical rubric to discover if his practice overlapped theory, or if he employed strategies unaccounted for in ideal theory. To help find strategies unaccounted for in homiletics, I also employed an inductive method of research. This method, loosely modeled after grounded theory, required me to analyze the integral parts and patterns of the 16 audio and five video sermons.

To ensure that I exhausted every possibility of finding practice unlike theory, I also employed a secondary data analysis on secondary sources. The secondary analysis used the same inductive method above but I did not analyze the 16 audio-recorded and

five video-recorded sermons. Rather, I analyzed everything else Lewis had published. I functioned as the primary data collection instrument, since I possessed certain characteristics and qualities that would bring insight and meaning to the data.

Discussion of the Results

Assuming homiletic theorists present the categories of ideal preaching in their books according to importance—the first category being the most important—Table 33 ranks those categories in order in which theorists present them in their books. Table 33 also includes Lewis’ arrangement of categories as he ranks them. This table enables the reader to see how Lewis’ order of categories corresponds with theory.

In the discussion below, I present the categories in the order of importance that Lewis places upon them.

Table 33

The Order in Which the Modified Version of Broadus’ Categories Surface in Four Seminal Books Compared to the Order of Importance Lewis Places on Them

Chapell (2005a)	Broadus (1897/2005)	Davis (1958)	Robinson (2001)	Lewis
1. Content	1. Content	1. Content	1. Content	1. Content
2. Arrangement	2. Illustrations	2. Arrangement	2. Arrangement	2. Arrangement
3. Illustrations	3. Arrangement	3. Introduction/ conclusion	3. Illustrations	3. Style
4. Introduction/ conclusion	4. Introduction/ conclusion	4. Illustrations	4. Introduction/ conclusion	4. Illustrations
5. Delivery	5. Style	5. Style	5. Style	5. Introduction/ conclusion
6. Style	6. Delivery		6. Delivery	6. Delivery

Content

Within each of the subcategories of content, there are 15 characteristics to which Lewis is compared. Out of 15 characteristics, the most frequently occurring percentage is 100%. The percentages range from 38% to 100%. These data help substantiate that Lewis' practice emulates theory in the content category. One can see from Table 33, Lewis orders content as number one in importance.

After analyzing his sermons, I concluded that the content category has the most sway in influencing his sermon appeal. His delivery is good, his style even better, but the content of his messages seems to be the best of everything he preaches. His strength is found in the universal generalizations he teaches that are as relevant as they are insightful and hopeful. Lewis says himself that what people enjoy most about his preaching is the relevancy. "Always when I'm reading," Lewis says of his scripture study, "I'm always thinking what will make this story...this prophecy of Isaiah...this parable of Christ...resonate in somebody's mind." If Lewis cannot find the relevancy he goes back and reads the scripture block repeatedly. "If I still can't find it," Lewis says, "I probably won't teach it."

Lewis repeatedly referred to relevancy in the interviews. Relevancy to him is like the hub of a wheel and everything else in the preparation, message, and delivery of the sermon are mere "spokes." For example, he said, "I tell people never teach the scriptures. Always teach what the scriptures teach." "Tell me more about that" I replied. His response was different than I expected. I assumed that "teach what the scriptures teach" was merely a reference to identifying the original intent of the authors, and it was to

Lewis, but it was more than that. Lewis said that he looks for what the scriptural authors meant to teach, but he also looks for what the story tells listeners about life—how to understand it and live it better. So when Lewis says, “teach what the scriptures teach,” what they teach to him is what homiletic theorists call “timeless truths.” These “truths” that Lewis shares are relevant, meaningful, and needful. Relevancy not only colors how Lewis views the scriptures but also what he chooses to preach from them.

Sometimes I’m looking for themes that link broader ideas, and sometimes I’m just going to go deeply into a few verses. And usually what determines which way I’m gonna do it is the *relevancy*. If I can bring the relevancy and the message with broader themes, I’m gonna do it with broader themes.... If one verse [presents the relevancy]..., I’ll spend the whole...[sermon] in one verse. *It has to be relevant*, that’s the important factor, not whether it’s sequential or conceptual, but whether it’s relevant.

Lewis feels that if he has not found what is relevant, then he has not found what the scripture is supposed to teach.

Whether Lewis spoke of selecting illustrations or his delivery, he again referenced the relevancy of the sermon. When he selects which scriptural stories to teach he said, “it needs to be a *relevant* story....I don’t want them to say, ‘Well, that was interesting, but what can I do with that.’ I want them to say, ‘Oh, that’s a great insight!’”

While it is true Lewis’ generalizations, or as Sunukjian (2007, p. 51) calls them, “timeless truths,” are relevant, what helps make them relevant is their penetrating insight—insight that reveals self-evident, universal truths about life, man, and God. Because the insights are sensible, logical, axiomatic, one recognizes them as true intuitively. For example, in one of Lewis books, he points out an insight from the Bible that applies to Christians and non-Christians alike. This insight applies to almost anyone

who has ever wrestled with becoming fixated on what they cannot have or cannot do rather than what they can have or can do.

The biblical story comes from Genesis 2 where Lucifer tempts Eve to partake of the forbidden tree. “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden” God said to Adam and Eve but do “not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:16-17, New International Version). Lewis points out that Lucifer diverts her focus from the unlimited number of trees to the only tree that is forbidden. “Lucifer desires us to focus on things we do not have and cannot do” Lewis says. Whether people believe it is Lucifer that fixates them on what they cannot have or cannot do, or they believe the temptation comes from some other source; nevertheless, most anyone who has raised or taught children has seen them occasionally become fixated on the one thing authority forbids them to do rather than all the things they can do; And many people can relate to the temptation of focusing on one of their weaknesses more than all their strengths. The point being, that this “timeless truth” is not only relevant to Christians but non Christians alike (Sunukjian, 2007, p. 51). It is relevant, but is also perceptive. It has psychological implications as well as theological meaning. It is these kinds of perceptive insights that are part of the impetus that have the potential to endear listeners to Lewis’ sermons.

As mentioned earlier, the other salient feature of Lewis’ content is found in its capacity to inspire hope. Though this is a theological stance, it also has pedagogical significance because theorists suggest that the preacher’s theological position relates to his or her appeal among listeners. P. Wilson (1995b, p. 99) noted that even though “The regular preaching diet in many churches is one of sermons that are less than hopeful,”

what listeners want, and what they need is hope-filled messages.

It became apparent that the hope in Lewis' sermons spring from his view of God and mankind. Lewis, on more than one occasion, said that God is "good, generous, [and] gracious" wanting "to give more than' than one ever asks for." This view of God could very well be one reason his sermons have appeal among listeners because that same view of God was inherent in the sermons of Henry Ward Beecher, one of the most prominent American preachers of the 19th Century. Beecher (1902) had appeal among listeners because he preached a God of love more than a God of vengeance.

Lewis sees God as George McDonald (C.S. Lewis' mentor) saw him—as a kind, forgiving, merciful, and a compassionate God. "I've often said I want to be judged by George McDonald's God," Lewis said. Lewis' view of God as a warmhearted and tender God motivates him to teach of a God that is merciful—a God that wants to lead his children with love rather than drive them with fear. Lewis continually encourages his listeners in his writings and sermons that God is good and gracious because Lewis knows that too often the "greatest fear for many" of his listeners is "spiritual failure—not massive failure, but of not quite measuring up" to God's expectations. "We're afraid we'll miss heaven by inches, not yards" Lewis says.

After making that statement, he soothes readers with salubrious words from scripture that speak of a God that strengthens, helps, and upholds. Lewis also reminds his listeners that they worship a God who loves them. He says that one of the most "profound discoveries" of his life "was the realization that the woman he loved," truly loved him. "Yet there is a more profound and deeper discovery.... It is the truth that the Savior and

God whom we love actually loves us.”

Not only is Lewis’ view of God hopeful, but so is his view of humankind. His sermons indicate that he sees people as inherently good.

Often we hear the expression, “Now I know the real you.” What is the real you? Far too often the real you is taken to mean what we are at our worst. We need to challenge that idea. The real you is you at your very best, not at your worst. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the Savior told us that when the younger son “came to himself,” his real self, he returned home. (Luke 15:17) The “real” younger son knew where he belonged and finally returned to his father. The clearest and most true evaluation of ourselves must encompass our best moments and qualities, not our worst.

This view Lewis takes of people digs beneath their layers of fear, self-doubt, insecurity, and weakness and unearths all that is inherently good in them. “There is certainly a lot of goodness” in humankind said Lewis, and “a tremendous amount of decency.”

Overall, after analyzing all of Lewis’ sermons, his strength centers not so much in how he presents, but what he presents. His “timeless truths” speak of relevancy, insight, and hope (Sunukjian, 2007, p. 51). Relevancy galvanizes his preparation, design, and delivery of all he hopes to say and preach. Everything is but a spoke in his personal homiletic philosophy and relevancy is the hub. And yoked beside that relevancy is an element of insight and hope.

Arrangement

In addition to content, arrangement is another category that comprises ideal preaching. There are eight subcategories and characteristics to which Lewis is compared. Out of eight subcategories and characteristics, the most frequently occurring percentage is 100%. The percentages range from 38 % to 100%. Since the most frequently occurring

percentage is 100%, it seems very probable that Lewis' practice overlaps theory with this category. These data help confirm what I observed in Lewis' preaching.

Lewis considers the arrangement second only to content because he likes the central idea to become a "handle" on a figurative "suitcase" that enables listeners to carry away the contents of the sermon. Lewis anticipates they will "pick it up and walk away" if the central theme is prominent.

1. Content
2. *Arrangement*
3. Style
4. Illustrations
5. Introduction, Transition, and Conclusion
6. Delivery

The strength of Lewis' arrangement comes from the way he unifies the sermon with a central idea and how the arrangement moves thought forward. Whether his sermons are deductive or inductive does not seem to matter as much as whether the arrangement has a central idea and has movement. I came to this conclusion after learning that one of my favorite sermons had all deductive principles and another favorite had all inductive. Whether Lewis preaches deductively or inductively, matters little since he can do both forms well. On the other hand, what is important is the manner in which he unifies the sermon with a central idea.

It was said of Harry Emerson Fosdick, a notable Baptist preacher in the early 20th Century, you could cut his sermon at any point and it "bleeds with the central idea"

(Crocker & Fosdick, 1971, p. 260). What was true of Fosdick's sermons is true of Lewis.' To Lewis, each piece of the sermon is a part of the whole, and the whole is comprised of the parts. The central idea is like a seed out of which the whole structure grows. The sermon has a single point to make, and everything branches and grows from that point. If any element detracts from that point Lewis prunes it away. He likes to compare the central idea to a handle on a suitcase. The suitcase represents his sermon. Stuffed inside are all his ideas, stories, anecdotes, and scripture. Without a handle, "I can't lift it. It's awkward. Bulky!" Lewis exclaims. Nevertheless, if he can put a "handle" on a sermon, "an idea that packages it..." then he "can get a grip on it."

Lewis went on to explain his view of the central idea by explaining how he teaches the Book of Ephesians. In Ephesians, the central idea is unity or oneness. Listeners "may not understand every verse, they can [however] understand it's about unity." Once he located that theme in Ephesians, then he could "carry Ephesians on that one idea alone:...one faith, one baptism, one with parent and child, one with master and servant, don't become one with the world." Rather than make up a phrase that represents the central idea, Lewis tries to pull them from the scriptures. "I usually try to find those handles in the text itself because if I create the 'handle' they may not remember it, but if it is his [meaning God], it's more powerful."

A second strength in Lewis' arrangements comes from their ability to move listener thought forward. To Lewis it is the logical connection between the central idea and its main points that creates movement. The main points have a dual role: They are divisions or extensions of the central idea, but they also function to move thought

forward. “I’m aware of how the pieces fit with one another and I like...an idea to logically lead.” An example is seen in a sermon I refer to in the analysis. In the sermon, Lewis explains to listeners how Jesus waited until the “fourth watch” of the night (3:00-6:00 a.m.) before he approached his disciples struggling on a stormy lake. Sometimes, Lewis notes, God does the same thing spiritually to his children today: he waits until the “fourth watch” of their lives before he answers their prayers.

“God answers later than sooner. That’s the first point,” said Lewis of this sermon. “Well, I want” [the sermon] to flow. I want to be able to say, ‘What if you’re sure you’re past your fourth watch?’” Then the second point, God knows you can endure it. “But why does he not just give me the answer?” Third point, sometimes God needs to let life’s experiences create a holding place in the heart where he can place the answer. Listeners say, “But I don’t understand why you still haven’t answered me God?” Fourth point, “Sometimes the answers come and we misinterpret them.” In this sermon, each point logically moves listener thinking to anticipate the next point. The next point answers the question. Lewis presents just enough of the point he is about to teach to create an emotional itch that listeners want him to scratch. However, what makes that point an itch that needs scratched is in the relevancy of the question it answers.

In sum, for Lewis, the arrangement is important second only to content. Arrangement is important because the central idea becomes the connective tissue that binds all his supporting ideas. Also to Lewis, communicating an idea involves movement. Listener thought needs to go somewhere. Just as a part in a story’s arrangement leads readers to anticipate the next part, likewise, the logical arrangement of the concepts in

Lewis' sermons leads listeners to anticipate new ideas (Burke, 1968). Nevertheless, what leads listeners to anticipate the new ideas is found in the relevancy of their concepts.

Style

Besides arrangement, style is also a category of ideal preaching. Within this category, there are 12 subcategories and characteristics to which Lewis was compared. Out of the 12 subcategories and characteristics, the most frequently occurring percentage is 100%. There is no variation between the 12 percentages. Since the most frequently occurring percentage is 100%, these data add to the body of knowledge that indicates Lewis' practice is congruent with theory. When asked to rank this category, Lewis placed it third:

1. Content
2. Arrangement
3. *Style*
4. Illustrations
5. Introduction, Transition, and Conclusion
6. Delivery

Though Lewis' ability to put listeners at ease with his casual, comfortable, and personal demeanor is part of the strength in his style, yet his vivid language is his greatest strength. Using figurative, image-laden words may seem like a pedagogical non-sequitur; or worse, a mere embellishment meant to impress learners, yet in Lewis' mind, style is almost as important as the arguments he makes. Reu and Steinhäuser (1922) expressed well what I sense about Lewis' feelings toward the power of language.

When...religious or moral truth is presented not only with convincing clearness, but with captivating beauty, it is received by the mind not only as true but also as valuable. And if it is seen as valuable, it at once gains attention and interest. (p. 184)

Lewis would probably add to the Reu and Steinhäuser (1922) statement, however, that language is a means to an end—not the end itself. Though he uses vivid language to sketch colorful images into listeners' minds, he does not garish his language with flowery words. Lewis uses figurative language and rhetorical devices as one would pepper an entrée: he sprinkles just enough to add “piquancy” but not too much to overpower the meal (Blackwood, 1948). Lewis believes that listeners value clear and beautiful words and phrases not just because they're interesting, but because they're more memorable, meaningful, and relevant.

Lewis attributes his penchant for using pictorial language as a result of his background. “I’m an English major; that has colored the way I read the scriptures. The scriptures are great literature, and so all the tactics...techniques that you apply to poetry...novel...or a play...I’m bringing into the scriptures.” Because of his literary background, Lewis says, “I’m looking for...foils...figures of speech, personification, simile, [and] metaphor.”

Lewis also has an affinity for the ancient art of rhetoric. He mentioned more than once in the interviews how it would be helpful for preachers to become familiar with rhetoric, a liberal art once studied alongside grammar and logic. In a biographical sketch he wrote about William Tyndale, Lewis said,

Though it [rhetoric] has assumed a negative connotation now, rhetoric was designed to help those who mastered its intricacies to fully comprehend the power of words. When arranged in certain patterns or stresses, a well-constructed phrase

could persuade, convince, and move the hearer.

Lewis sees rhetoric in the same way as Augustine in that it does not aim to manipulate, it aims to inspire the will and to make what is obscure clear (Augustine, 426 AD/1997).

One reason Lewis wrote a biography on William Tyndale, a man instrumental in translating much of the Bible from Greek to English, was because of his appreciation for Tyndale's rhetorical skills—skills that enabled him to express ideas into beautiful words. He says it was Tyndale that enshrined scriptural wisdom into short, simple, trenchant phrases like “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way,” “seek and ye shall find,” “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,” “no man can serve two masters” “eat drink and be merry,” and “Be not weary in well doing.” All this simply to say that what has influenced Lewis—English and rhetoric—has influenced his preaching.

Because of this influence, Lewis looks for words in his scripture study that he can use in his sermons; words that are more memorable for his listeners. “I love words... they're powerful. So...I'm looking for single words, or small phrases that stick in the mind.” One way he gets them to stick in the mind is through alliteration and parallelism. For example, when he teaches the story of Samson in the Bible, he focuses on a part of the narrative where Delilah cuts Samson's hair, and the Philistines “put out his eyes” and “bound him with fetters of brass.” Lewis says, when “we break...[God's commandments], the devil seeks to *break* us, *blind* us, and *bind* us in sin” (emphasis added). It is easy to remember *break*, *blind*, and *bind* because put together they are an alliteration.

Asking Lewis why he chooses pithy little words or phrases like “dangerous

decade,” “Ensign endings,” “remain-with-me marriage,” “Syrupy, sick, sweet, self-pity,” “coins or counterfeits,” or “Peter-Pan problem,” he says these kinds of words and phrases “hang in the mind” because of the “rhythm and the balance of the sentence . . . [and] the sound of it” make it “pleasing to the ear.” Lewis believes that just as music serves as a kind of pneumatic device for remembering words and ideas, likewise, figurative language is “music of the scriptures” and a preacher’s prose. Figurative language puts “a picture in somebody’s mind.” To say, “‘You’re kind of shallow in your thinking’ is not quite as picturesque as a ‘saucer soul.’ They can see a saucer” better than mere words. What Lewis is actually doing is attaching concrete symbols to abstract ideas. He clothes his language with earthly, tangible images that turn listener ears into eyes.

Lewis will often attach a concrete symbol to the central idea and if possible, each of the main points. For example, in one sermon where one of the main points teaches listeners about the nature of God, Lewis takes listeners to Matthew 10 where Jesus says, “ye are of more value than many sparrows” then Lewis takes them forward a few verses where Jesus counsels his disciples to offer “little ones a cup of cold water” (Matthew 10:31, 42; King James Bible, LDS version). Lewis says, “We worship a ‘two-sparrow, cold-cup-of-water’ God who cares about the most tiniest of individuals, about the tiniest of acts.” Lewis will refer back to that phrase, “two-sparrow, cold-cup-of-water God” every time he mentions God’s awareness of people’s seemingly most insignificant acts.

Lewis prefers to pull his symbolic language from the scriptures but often it comes from a non-scripture source. For example, on his Uncle Merlin’s ranch, Lewis observed one of his uncle’s rams jump over the edge of a cliff in fear, and “one by one” the other

five sheep with the ram “jumped to their death.” With this story, Lewis teaches readers to avoid peer pressure by saying, “Don’t leap with the sheep.” He repeats, “Don’t leap with the sheep” throughout his writings every time he counsels readers to avoid a “follow the herd” mentality.

Lewis sees these pungent words and phrases like “Don’t leap with the sheep,” as memorable and meaningful, but more importantly, he sees them as relevant. Relevance came up again after I shared this excerpt from one of his sermons on God’s temples:

A temple is an outward symbol that testifies the Lord desires to dwell with his people, for he has built his house in their midst.... He is always home. The pillar of fire by night over the ancient Hebrew tabernacle and the cloud by day suggested that truth, just as smoke coming from a chimney during the day and a light shining through the windows at night (see Numbers 14:14) suggest to us that a person is home.

After stating this phrase, I asked Lewis to share with me why he uses those phrases, that imagery of “smoke coming from the chimney,” and “light shining through the windows.” He said, “It’s the *relevancy*...I want them [listeners] to realize God is a present God. He’s there.... There’s God’s house with everybody else’s house, so where does he live? He lives with his people.” In other words, this cozy, Thomas Kincaid image Lewis puts into listeners minds is a kind of symbol that represent the nature of God. It represents a God who sits by the hearth of his fire warming his hands while he waits for his children to come up the cobblestone path to his door, knock and join him by the fire. The objective he seeks in using those vivid words is to make God welcoming, hospitable, close, and approachable. Turning the notion of God as an abstract, cosmic entity into a God that is good natured, warm, and friendly is what makes Lewis’ vivid language so relevant for listeners.

Thus, Lewis' words are not an end in themselves but merely a means to reach the end. The end goal is a message that is relevant in the lives of listeners.

Illustrations

Next to style, illustrations are another category important to theorists. Within this category, there are 16 subcategories and characteristics. Rather than merely account for their presence in the 16 sermons, I looked for their presence in all 161 illustrations used in those 16 sermons. Table 34 shows the percentage of sermons that were scripture-centered, personal, or "other."

Though there were 16 subcategories and characteristics, one characteristic did not apply to the scripture-centered and "other" illustrations. Out of the 15 subcategories and characteristics of the scripture-centered illustrations, the most frequently occurring percentage is 100%. The percentages range from 53 % to 100%. Out of the 16 subcategories and characteristics of the personal illustrations, the most frequently occurring percentage is 100%. The percentages range from 74 % to 100%. Out of the 15 subcategories and characteristics of the "other" illustrations, the most frequently occurring percentage is 100%. The percentages range from 87% to 100%. Since the most frequently occurring percentage is 100%, it seems very probable that Lewis' illustrations are congruent with theory. These data corroborate my findings.

Table 34

Illustrations That Were Scripture Centered, Personal, or "Other"

Scripture-centered	Personal	Other
34%	46%	19%

Though Lewis feels that illustrations in some respects can be as equally as important as the sermon's arrangement and style, he does place it fourth:

1. Content
2. Arrangement
3. Style
4. *Illustrations*
5. Introduction, Transition, and Conclusion
6. Delivery

Lewis' illustrations are appealing because they effectively clarify the point he makes. They also appeal to listeners because he isolates their human features which make them more relevant. Sometimes preachers use stories that capture attention but the stories do not illuminate the ideas to which they are connected. With Lewis' illustrations, however, there is usually a clear analogy between the story and the idea it elucidates. Not all his illustrations are personal stories with a plot, but all his personal stories illustrate. In other words, his personal stories almost always simplify and shed light on some concept. I yet to hear him offer stories that merely entertain.

Here is an example that demonstrates how one of Lewis' illustrations makes a concept crystal clear. The illustration explains what enables Christians to accomplish the seemingly impossible "walk on water" tasks in their lives. The story comes from Lewis' childhood when he lost his pet mouse in his home. "You will find that creature!" said his terrified mother. A few days later, she found the mouse on her pillow in the middle of the night.

Terrified, slowly she began to reach over to try and turn on the light. She did get the light turned on, but as it came on it had scared the mouse and he ran right across her head into her hair. She sat both upright and threw the mouse out of her hair in the middle of the bed....

Now my mother had this thought process: “There is a mouse, my son needs that mouse. I hate mice....” Without even thinking just reacting on her love for me she reached out and scooped him up in her hands. Then she realized what she had done, but rather than let it go, she began to shake her hands back and forth so the mouse couldn’t...bite her and [she] went screaming through the house shaking her hands, yelling for me, trying to turn on lights with her elbow shaking her hands... I finally woke up.

She said, “Lewis I have got the mouse. I have got the mouse.” I said, “Where is it?” “Right here” she is shaking her hands. She dropped it on the bed...

You know that’s a very simple thing, but I realized from that time forth my mother really loved me and that *her love for me enabled her to do something impossible* for her, something extremely difficult. It is our love for the Savior and our love for one another that will enable us to do all those difficult impossible “walk on water” things (emphasis added).

In this example, Lewis helps listeners grasp the concept by telling a story that illuminates and simplifies a concept. Just as Lewis’ mom performed a seemingly impossible task out of love for her son, likewise, people’s love for God will enable them to accomplish the seemingly impossible “walk on water” tasks God asks them to do.

It is not surprising that Lewis considers it important to choose illustrations that tightly fit the concepts he explicates—especially considering he values relevance and there is a relationship between relevance and illustrations. The *Merriam-Webster online dictionary* defines relevance as “having significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand.” Likewise, Lewis’ illustrations have a significant “bearing” on the idea he seeks to illuminate. Lewis seeks for an illustration that is relevant to the concept. He wants the illustration to not only center attention on the point he wishes to make, but he

wants it to be perfectly pertinent or as he might say, “relevant” to the topic at hand. In preaching, it is easy to find stories that relate to ideas, but difficult to find stories that illustrate a concept with preciseness, but Lewis does this well.

Another subcategory that best represents Lewis strength is the way in which he isolates the human element of a story. Isolating the human element means to pull out of the story all the familiar emotions, modern dilemmas, and everyday situations people face. So as Chapell (2005a) aptly put it, if one tells a story about the Spanish Armada, they best let “the listeners see the canons flash, feel the storm, and fear the shoals” (p. 181).

One way Lewis brings a human element to the story above is by taking listeners into his mother’s mind to sense her dilemma. “Now my mother had this thought process: ‘There is a mouse, my son needs that mouse. I hate mice....’” Listeners experience the uncertainty, the doubt, the fear, as Lewis unfolds the soul of his mother and presents to listeners not only her terror but her goodness. Her emotions are familiar to Lewis’ listeners. Certainly not every listener has had to handle a rodent, but most everyone has experienced fear. Lewis touched upon a chord that is at the center of human experience. Listeners are naturally pulled into the story because the very emotions that Lewis unearths most everyone has felt.

Again, we see Lewis adding another spoke to the hub of relevancy. Maybe not everyone has had to scoop up a mouse to serve a child, but most everyone has faced a fear of heights, death, public speaking, failure, or social rejection. This story is relevant because it speaks to humankind. It speaks to every listener who can feel fear.

Introduction, Transition, and Conclusion

In addition to illustrations, a sermon's introduction, transitions, and conclusion are also important to ideal preaching. When asked to rank this category, Lewis placed it fifth.

1. Content
2. Arrangement
3. Style
4. Illustrations
5. *Introduction, Transition, and Conclusion*
6. Delivery

Introduction. The ideal introduction possesses seven subcategories and characteristics. Out of the seven subcategories and characteristics, the most frequently occurring percentage from the data set was 100%. The percentages range from 40 % to 100%. Since the most frequently occurring percentage is 100%, these data help build upon the other evidences that Lewis' practice parallels theory. Of the seven subcategories and characteristics to which Lewis was compared, his greatest strength comes from his ability to help listeners understand why they should listen, and to keep the introduction short. When asked to share how he creates a need in the audience to listen, he replies, "I have to make it relevant." One can get a feel for what Lewis considers relevant by an example taken from one of his sermons on prayer. After 30 years of teaching college students, he tells listeners how he saw a pattern in his student's concerns:

I found that the single most oft asked question by students to me as a teacher is, "How do I get answers to prayer?" "How do I know that the answer I am getting

is really from God?” or “Am I my making my own answer up?” “Why do they seem sometimes to take so long?” “How come I don’t seem to get answers?” “Why do trials go on and on?” “Why do blessings that are very good for me not come?” They all have to do with that communication line that we try to open with our Father in Heaven and keep open.

Because these questions bleed relevancy, immediately Lewis helps establish a need to listen.

The second strength in Lewis’ introductions is their brevity. He piques listener interest with something relevant, and then immerses them into the scriptures quickly. “I believe in very short introductions—something to catch their attention. . . . but then you get them right into the scriptures.” That immediate immersion into scripture is a boon to Lewis’ appeal because he preaches to a homogenous group of LDS listeners who treasure scripture. Because the LDS culture strongly encourages personal and family scripture study as part of a daily spiritual diet, listeners come to his sermons already familiar with the scriptural stories and basic doctrines the scriptures teach. They love the scriptures but often miss how they are relevant to their lives. For this reason Lewis’ preaching appeals to them. They know he will drench them with God’s words, and make “the profound things simple, the simple things profound, and all things practical” (Low, 2006, p. 94).

Transition. Ideal transitions have two subcategories. In both subcategories, there was a presence in 100% of Lewis 16 sermons. There are 1,274 transitional words or phrases sprinkled throughout the 16 sermons. So not only is there a presence of transitions in Lewis’ sermons, but the frequency count indicates he employed many. From this, I conclude that his use of transitions is congruent with theory. The words he uses most to transition are “so” (577 times) and “now” (523 times). “Now says, ‘I am

going to try to make a point...[or] What does this mean?’” says Lewis. But it not only functions as a signal to listeners that he will say something significant but it also functions as way to transition between two ideas.

As mentioned under the arrangement category, I was cognizant of a smooth, fluid motion between the central idea and the main points. But there is also a smooth flow between the sub points within those main points. The transitions between all the major and minor points brought coherency to his sermons.

Conclusion. Besides introductions and transitions, a sermon must also have a conclusion. There are eight subcategories by which Lewis’ conclusions were assessed. Out of those eight, the most frequently occurring percentage was bimodal with a 94% and a 100%. The percentages range from 50% to 100%.

Since the most frequently occurring percentage is 94% and 100%, it seems very probable that Lewis’ conclusions emulate theory. Lewis’ conclusions have appeal because they end the sermon with hope, and they bring the sermon full circle. As mentioned earlier, Lewis’s sermons emanate hope, but that hope becomes more focused almost laser like in the conclusion. He will often focus hope by telling listeners what they *can* do with God’s help rather than what they *should* do.

There is also strength in the way Lewis concludes his sermons by bringing listener thought full circle. He returns to the introduction, echoes an earlier thought, and gives listeners a final look at the central idea. Because Lewis will often attach a concrete symbol to the central idea and main points, he can quickly refer back to symbols in the conclusion that represent the concepts he taught. Each of the those main points

represented by a symbol are like jewels in a crown that Lewis spins one last time to give listeners a last look at each facet of the sermon's most significant and relevant ideas.

Delivery

Besides introductions, transitions, and conclusions, the last category of the ideal sermon is delivery. In this category, there are 12 characteristics to which Lewis is compared. Five video sermons were analyzed in addition to the 16 audio sermons to assess what percentage of the sermons had a presence of these characteristics. Out of 12 characteristics, the most frequently occurring percentage is 100%. There is no variation between the 12 percentages.

Since the most frequently occurring percentage is 100%, it seems very probable that Lewis' does practice theory in his delivery. When asked to rank this category, Lewis placed it sixth:

1. Content
2. Arrangement
3. Style
4. Illustrations
5. Introduction, Transition, and Conclusion
6. *Delivery*

This category has the least influence on Lewis' preaching appeal. This in no way demeans the importance of Lewis' delivery; Even if everything else was good in one of his sermons if his delivery was poor, it would probably diminish the rest of his sermon's appeal. Poor delivery tends to get in the way of everything that is good in a sermon. With

Lewis' delivery, however, nothing seems to get in the way since his delivery is neither too strong nor too weak. The delivery serves its purpose without getting in the way of the message. There are two characteristics that are prominent in Lewis delivery: the way he tethers reason alongside passion, and the way he expresses genuine and sincere emotion.

Lewis' is proficient at using reasonable, logical arguments to support his assertions, even when those assertions are accompanied by emotion. When he does express emotion, along with that emotion, he attaches a logical and often profound argument or principle: "So at age 14, if you were me and you were praying and you say 'Father in Heaven, help me to forgive my father for leaving,' says Lewis when he describes the wrestle he had coping with the memory of a father who left and then ignored Lewis most of his life. "And one day I'm in my early thirties..." Lewis states, "as I'm thinking about my father...my two sons came in, and they just stood there in front of me." As his boys stare at him, all his good memories with his boys flood his mind. "And I looked at those boys and I loved them so deeply. And I thought, 'What a wonderful thing it is to be a father of a son'" Lewis says of the experience. "Now the Lord says..., 'Now that you know a father's love and a father's joy, *would you be the son who lost his father or the father who lost his son?*' And I began to weep, not for me, my father." Lewis concludes, "I knew by experience, it was a greater tragedy for him to lose all those simple wonderful little moments...with me and my sisters.... And in that moment I could forgive and be at peace." In this example, Lewis shares emotion, but along with that emotion, he shares a very logical and sound insight.

Lewis' second strength with sermon delivery is the way in which he expresses

genuine and sincere emotion. When Lewis expresses emotion about something, he speaks plainly, simply, without long or embellished words. For example, after reading a Robert Frost poem, he says, “That is how I feel about the gospel.” He does not become overly sentimental or emotional he just says what he feels. In addition, the way he says it and how he says it, makes it sound real, natural, and unforced. As the researcher, I perceive that Lewis wants to simply express no more or no less than what he really feels.

Conclusion

There are two features that are the most intriguing in this research. The first feature is that Lewis’ practice conforms closely to homiletic theory, yet he has never read a book on homiletics. “I’ve read a lot of sermons.... But I’ve not read anything on how to give a sermon,” Lewis says. So how did he develop a preaching practice that harmonizes so well with homiletic theory? Did he attain the skills from the sermons he read? Perhaps in the same way that reading good literature improves writing, reading good sermons improves preaching. Most of those sermons Lewis read, however (excluding George McDonald’s), were LDS—a culture that is generally insulated from homiletic theory. The LDS bookstores have not and do not sell homiletic books. The point being, Lewis has not been exposed to homiletic theory yet he applies it. The lay members of the LDS church begin speaking in church at 3 years old, but they do not receive any formal training in homiletics.

It is not clear where Lewis gleaned his homiletic skills. However, I have concluded that for a preacher like him, one who has somehow sidestepped the need to

study homiletics, preaching is an intuitive art/craft. His skills come naturally rather than through study. Which means this preacher and perhaps others like him can bypass the study of homiletics and still preach well. They merely need exposure to verities of good communication, which apparently derive from sources beyond homiletic writers.

Whether these verities emanate from great works of art, nature, or life's experiences, people like Lewis recognize and glean them into their own preaching. Gratefully though, for those without his intuition, homiletic theorists have described preaching strategies with clarity and conciseness; so much so that preachers can replicate them in their own preaching. Theorists have articulated into books what preachers like Lewis have gleaned from life. So if one has not "breathed" homiletics from life as Lewis, he or she can at least learn them from theorists and turn good speaking into something even better.

The last feature I find most intriguing is Lewis personal homiletic philosophy. As mentioned earlier, relevancy functions as a hub from which the categorical "spokes" expand outward to create his own conceptual model of preaching (see Figure 10). Considering other preachers like Lewis have a personal homiletic model, in what way do their sermons vary as they place delivery, illustrations, or style at the core? It seems a model centered on delivery would translate into charisma. If centered on illustrations, the sermon would become a story. If centered on style the sermon would be eloquent. Whatever preachers place at the center of their homiletic philosophy becomes the hub from which their preparation, design, and delivery center. Whether or not a preacher should place relevance at the center of preaching is a question this dissertation cannot answer, but it can help explain at least what has made one preacher appealing.

Future Research

Since preaching is the “most under-conceptualized and studied phenomenon in religious studies” (Guthrie, 2007, p. 108), there is pressing need for future research in many areas related to good preaching. This focuses on research related only to this present study. More specifically, it focuses on future research that could deepen understanding about the categories of ideal preaching.

One way researchers could deepen understanding about the categories of ideal preaching is to target a variety of preachers with broad appeal and discover how they view and rank the categories of ideal preaching in order of importance. Do they rank the categories equally? Does their religious affiliation influence how they rank them? Are the categories general enough to cross over ideological boundaries?

Second, one could build on this present study by also researching what other preachers place at the “hub” of their personal homiletic philosophy. Do all preachers with broad appeal place relevance at the center of their personal homiletic models or is Lewis an anomaly? Furthermore, does religious affiliation influence which category, subcategory, or characteristic appealing preachers place at the center of their preaching? Why does religious ideology influence the focus and in what way?

Third, future research could also inform understanding about the categories of ideal preaching by discovering how listeners perceive the categories of ideal preaching. It is certainly helpful to understand how preachers perceive these categories, but perhaps equally as important to understand how listeners perceive them too. Do they rank them in importance as theorists and practitioners like Lewis do? Pargament and Silverman (1982)

found that Roman Catholic listeners perceive the sermon's relevance and its central idea as having the most impact on their experience. Is that true of other Christian faiths? It seems logical for researchers to want to increase their understanding of listener perception since a preacher's broad appeal is subject to the listener's perception.

Finally, in some Christian churches both ecclesiastical leaders and lay members preach. Do church leaders view and rank the categories of ideal preaching differently than the lay members? If so, how do church leaders view and rank the categories differently than lay preachers?

These questions, along with their answers, may provide information that will move homiletic theory into new areas. These were not areas of concern when homiletic theory was first espoused or when it was modified. Asking questions and seeking answers will move homiletic theory into new areas and provide us with better tools for understanding the effects that preaching from the Christian tradition can have on others. The effort will also inform and actually expand what was the first endeavor into instructional design and help reestablish this as an area of inquiry for people interested in others forms of instruction.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Rubric

Sermon Content	Preacher's Practice
Scripture centered	
1. The central idea, doctrines, and principles derive from the text.	
2. Preacher understands the intent of the biblical authors.	
3. Preacher identifies the problem/solution that the biblical author addresses.	
Built on generalizations	
1. The generalization contains universal truths that apply to a variety of listeners.	
2. The generalizations are based on scripture.	
3. The generalizations possess a subject and a compliment	
Applicable to listeners	
1. The content does not center merely on scriptural facts	
2. The content offers more than a mere explanation of scripture	
Centered on Christ	
1. The sermon centers on some aspect of Christ's person, teaching, or work.	
2. The preacher does not impose Christ on the text.	
3. Rather than merely point to the moral character of a scriptural person, the preacher points to the source of that character the scriptures commend.	
4. Rather than ascribe a person's good deeds solely to him or her, the preacher ascribes it to Christ.	
Infused with hope	
1. Rather than merely proclaiming obedience, preachers should proclaim the source, reason, and the effects of obedience.	
2. The sermon focuses more upon God's solutions rather than the listener's problems.	
3. Rather than tell listeners what they should, must, or ought to do, the preacher tells them what they can do with God's help.	

Sermon Arrangement	Preacher's Practice
Includes both inductive and deductive forms	
The Arrangement of the Sermon has a Central Idea	
Moves thought forward	
Derives from the text	
1. The sermon form is either topical or textual.	
2. If a sermon is topical, it takes the central idea from a scripture passage. The main points come from the subject's nature rather than text's distinctions.	
3. If the sermon is textual, it not only derives the central idea from the text but also the sermon's main points.	
Has a central purpose	
Sermon Introduction, Transition, and Conclusion	Preacher's Practice
Introduction	
Introduction is brief	
Introduction begins with the listeners rather than the scripture text	
1. Introduction begins with an attention-getting devices in Table 1.	
2. Introduction creates a desire to listen	
3. Introduction orientates listeners to what they will hear in the sermon.	
Introduction is separated from the extemporaneous remarks	
Introduction does not open with apologies or excuses.	
Transition	
1. Transitions should signal a new direction of thought.	
2. Transitions should look back at previous ideas to prepare listeners for new ideas.	
Conclusion	
1. Conclusion comes full circle.	

2. Conclusion highlights all the main points of the sermon.	
3. Conclusion tells listeners what they should do with what they now know.	
4. Conclusion ends when preachers announces it is the end.	
5. Conclusion ends with hope.	
6. Conclusion is brief.	
7. Conclusion places the most meaningful sentence last.	
8. Conclusion ends with a high level of personal, candid, intimate language.	
Sermon Style	Preacher's Practice
Naturalness	
1. The preacher's words are unforced, unrehearsed, and genuine.	
2. The sermon sounds like a lively and casual conversation.	
Openness	
1. Preachers disclose their feelings.	
2. Preachers share worries, weaknesses, wants, and needs.	
3. Preachers do not confess sins or plea for sympathy.	
4. Preachers appropriately express defeats as well as triumphs, and doubt as well as faith.	
Image-laden words	
1. The preacher's language paints images into listener's minds.	
2. The preacher uses strong verbs and nouns that convey ideas.	
3. Preacher uses strong adjectives and adverbs.	
Figurative language	
Preacher uses simple words	
Sermon Illustrations	Preacher's Practice
Made relevant by isolating human feature	

Match the truth they illustrate	
Are appropriate and appropriately used	
1. Illustrations are free of violence.	
2. Illustrations are free of incidents related to birthing, blood, bedrooms, bathrooms, and gore.	
3. Preacher informs the audience if the illustration is fictional.	
4. The preacher does not use personal stories to make him/her the center of attention.	
5. If good results from the preacher's actions, then he or she gives credit to God.	
6. The preacher does not make an exhibition out of his or her weaknesses.	
7. The preacher does not turn the sermon into a confessional or divulge personal sins.	
Are specific rather than general	
1. Preacher uses descriptive, expressive, concrete words.	
2. Preacher uses characterization strategies to portray character in universal terms listeners understand.	
3. Preacher uses dialogue to make characters more lifelike.	
Begin and end properly.	
1. The story begins at the point of the story's action/tension not chronologically.	
2. The preacher orientates listeners in time and space.	
3. Illustrations bring closure to the problem presented in the story.	
4. Preacher does not reveal the end of the story too soon.	
Sermon Delivery	Preacher's Practice
Gesture	
1. The preacher gestures naturally rather than nervously.	
2. The preacher avoids inappropriate gestures (pounding pulpit,	

pointing fingers).	
Eye contact	
1. The preacher's eyes pan across the congregation and occasionally rest on different listeners.	
2. The preacher's eyes focus on listeners not notes.	
Voice	
1. The preachers voice moves up and down the note scale rather than settling into a single, monotone note.	
2. The preacher says things as though he or she means them.	
3. The preacher regulates his or her volume according to the distance of the farthest listener	
4. The preacher varies his or her voice to bring emphasis to points.	
5. The preacher varies the pacing of the words he or she speaks.	
6. The preacher pauses at crucial words, phrases, and concepts.	
Emotional appeal	
1. The preacher expresses genuine and sincere emotion.	
2. The preacher tethers reason alongside passion.	

Appendix B

Letter from Religious Educator

April 8, 2010

As a peer review of the relationship between practice and principle in Homiletics I have interviewed the author several times in the past three years attempting to extract answers to searching questions. My questions centered on why he was involved in this particular study, how he established credibility and avoided personal bias, and what were some of the weaknesses of his methodology. As time progressed, we delved deeper into a discussion of his categorical results model of homiletics and how he felt justified to include relevancy as a stand-alone critical component around which everything else revolves.

Accordingly, with this subjective approach I have come to the following conclusion: This piece effectively researches and clearly demonstrates its purpose and objective with concise results. While being critical, yet sympathetic, my analysis agrees with the author's "Lewis Perspective", and I believe that the intent of this work harmonizes with both practice and theory in the field of reaching another human soul. It is my opinion that this work will prove to enlighten the mind and strengthen the skills of teachers and preachers alike.

Chris Powell

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Powell', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

(Principal)
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VITA

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Education

Ph.D. in Instructional Technology and Learning Science, Utah State University (2010).

MS in Instructional Technology and Learning Science, Utah State University (1997).

BS in Psychology, Brigham Young University (1992)

Professional Experience

Religious Instructor, 1992-present

Orem High Seminary, Pleasant Grove High Seminary, Lehi High Seminary, Alpine Jr. Seminary
 Courses: Old Testament, New Testament, Doctrine and Covenants and Book of Mormon

Curriculum Designer, 1996-1997

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah
 -Designed instruction in the audio/visual department

Especially For Youth Session Director, Summers 1998-2003

Utah State University, Oregon State University, Western Kentucky University, University of Missouri, San Diego State University
 -Supervised Especially For Youth programs on campus
 - Instructed teens and adults

Grants

Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship
 Brigham Young University, July 2007
 Award Recipient in the amount of \$1500

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